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ABSTRACT

A 2-year project was designed and implemented to improve attendance and academic achievement of targeted elementary (N=69) and secondary (N=78) school students. Teachers reported concerns about a high truancy rate and low grades among some students. The intervention provided for an individualized diagnostic-prescriptive approach in a humanistic school environment. It called for high involvement by the chief professional participants of the project who interacted with target students in the combined role of advisor, consultant, instructor, and friend. These professionals maintained close contact with students in school and made home visitations to establish rapport with parents. Emphasis was placed on developing and maintaining a warm and caring relationship with the student and the student's family. Student attendance and academic achievement during the intervention period of 1985-1987 were compared with attendance and achievement during the 1983-1984 base year. Results revealed that a significant number of students did improve attendance and achievement as projected in the terminal objectives. The seven chapters of this report describe the program in detail. Forty-four tables are included; relevant forms and materials are presented in 68 appendices. (Author/NB)

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IMPROVING STUDENT ATTENDANCE AND ACHIEVEMENT THROUGH INTERVENTION OF A STUDENT SUPPORT/HOME-SCHOOL LIAISON COMMITTEE

by

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the National Ed.D. Program for Educational Leaders

Nova University

CG 020447

Two-Year Individual Practicum Report
Springfield Cluster
Submitted: February, 1987

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ABSTRACT

AUTHOR: James H. LaGoy
DATE: February, 1987

CLUSTER: Springfield II
PRACTICUM: Two-Year Individual Practicum Report

TITLE: Improving Student Attendance and Achievement Through Intervention of a Student Support/Home-School Liaison Committee

ABSTRACT: This report describes an extensive two-year project designed to improve attendance and academic achievement of 147 target students in grades one through ten, at the time of initial intervention, attending Au-Sable Valley Central School. Problems originally observed included a district attendance ratio below the tenth percentile statewide for the 1982-83 school year. Surveys of teachers indicated serious concerns about a high truancy rate and the number of students with low grades, especially at the junior-senior high school level.

As a result of practicum intervention during a two-year period extending from February 1, 1985 to January 31, 1987, attendance for target students was expected to increase significantly compared to attendance for the 1983-84 school year. Additionally, it was anticipated that academic achievement of project students would increase substantially in comparison to the same time period for the base year. The "dual-thrust" project involved two groups, one at the junior-senior high school level consisting of 78 students, and one at the elementary school level involving 69 students.

The intervention strategy provided for an individualized diagnostic-prescriptive approach in a humanistic and caring school environment. The fundamental design called for high involvement by the chief professional participants in the project, members of the Student Support/Home-School Liaison Committees. Committee members were assigned the responsibility of interacting with target students in the combined role of advisor, consultant, instructor, and friend. Emphasis was placed on developing and maintaining a warm and caring relationship with the student and the student's family. Committee members maintained close contact with students in school and made home visitations for the purpose of establishing rapport with parents.

A detailed evaluation of the project revealed that a significant number of students did improve attendance and achievement as projected in the terminal objectives. Evaluation included a comparison of student attendance and academic achievement during the two-year intervention phase of the project with the same time period for the 1983-84 base year.

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Chapter 1

THE AUSABLE VALLEY CENTRAL SCHOOL COMMUNITY

The School Community

This practicum took place within the administrative setting of AuSable Valley Central School District, a moderate-sized rural district located in Clinton and Essex Counties in northeastern New York State. The district, with an enrollment of approximately 1,500 pupils, operates two elementary schools and one junior-senior high school, has a total professional staff of 104, and a non-teaching staff numbering 82. Elementary schools in each of two villages feed students into a central junior-senior high school, with most students bused.

The unemployment rate in Essex County is continuously cited as one of the highest in the State of New York. (See Appendix p.139.) The socioeconomic composition of the school district community varies but is mainly lower class, with a heavy concentration of poverty-level residents. According to the 1980 Census of Population and Housing, the median household income for district residents was $13,429, with more than ten percent of the families with incomes below the established federal poverty level. (See Appendix pp.140-1.)

There are no operational industrial or commercial centers in the district and most people desiring employment are forced

to commute significant distances. A number of residents are employed by Dannemora State Prison, Ray Brook Federal Prison, Plattsburgh Air Force Base, or Georgia Pacific Paper Mill, all of which are commuting distances from the district. Many of those employed in the district work in tourism service positions, lumbering, or other low-paying jobs.

A large percentage of the buildings, including homes and abandoned industrial complexes, are very old, run-down and unsightly. Many people reside in dilapidated trailers and are forced to burn wood as the major source of fuel.

AuSable Valley Central School District

The writer has served for 17 years as Superintendent of AuSable Valley Central School System, and operates from a separate administrative building located near the geographic center of the district. The following provides background information on each of the three schools in the district.

AuSable Forks Elementary School

AuSable Forks Elementary School is situated in the small village of AuSable Forks. The school was first occupied by pupils in February, 1972 and is a modern open-space, well-equipped and cared-for building. The current population numbers 240 students who come from a predominantly poor background. The school has a staff of 15 experienced professionals and an average class size of approximately 24 students. Supporting educational services include a comprehensive special education

program, vocal music, physical education, speech, and remedial reading and mathematics programs.

Keeseville Elementary School

Keeseville Elementary School, in operation since 1959, is located in the village of Keeseville. Although the building is older than the other two schools in the district, it is a well-maintained and attractive facility. Four hundred fifty-six students attend the school, most of them from a poor to average economic background. The school has a staff of 27 professionals and an average class size of 22 pupils. Supporting educational services include a comprehensive special education program, vocal music, physical education, speech, and remedial reading and mathematics programs.

Clintonville Junior-Senior High School

Clintonville Junior-Senior High School is located in a rural area, five miles equidistant from the small villages of AuSable Forks and Keeseville. The school, completed in 1972, is a modern, well-equipped and maintained facility, with the capacity to serve 1,300 students. The population at the time the practicum was initiated numbered 833 pupils coming from a diversified, but predominantly poor background, 99 percent of them being white. There is a moderate turnover of pupils and generally, 50 percent of the graduates go on to college.

The school has a staff of 56 professionals, a relatively low student-teacher ratio of 15-one, is organized by academic

departments, operates on a flexible cycle schedule, and has a modified tracking system. The major program components are as follows: (a) a highly-diversified curriculum available to all students; (b) a vocational-occupational program offered both at the school and the Board of Cooperative Educational Services Center; (c) a comprehensive special education and special needs program; and (d) many student activities in music, clubs, interscholastic athletics and related areas.

The Truancy Problem Alarms School Officials

The writer surveyed recent literature that focused on the extent and significant causes of the problem, and efforts to counteract them. He reviewed material germane to the problem areas as identified by the Educational Resources Information Center. The following briefly discusses the scope and seriousness of the problem as reported in the literature.

Sewall and Sherman (1979) reported that the truancy problem at the elementary and secondary education level had grown to epidemic proportions in recent years and that school officials didn't know what to do about the situation. A survey of the literature revealed that more students were deliberately staying out of school and that nationally, millions of students were truant or absent each day. DeLeonibus (1978) stated that a certain level of absence is normal and that absences are a fact of school life in the same way that adult absences are a part of the work world. However, the concern is that student

absenteeism has been growing at a rate that can be described as alarming.

Bartlett (1978) commented that for the 1976-77 school year, the National Center for Educational Statistics estimated that only 92 percent of the students enrolled in school were in attendance on any given day. This absence rate of eight percent is twice that considered normal by national health officials. According to Neil and the American Association of School Administrators, (1979) keeping children in school escalated to the "critical issue" category for school administrators and school boards at the end of the 1970's.

It should be noted that educators generally agree that there is often great difficulty in determining if a child is absent from school for legitimate reasons or if he or she is truant. A major reason for the difficulty is because of the common parental practice of lying about the child's failure to attend school as a result of truancy. Bamber (1979) pointed out that when truancy stems from the indifferent attitude of parents toward school attendance, the problem is extremely hard to solve.

Research indicated that a variety of factors usually combine to affect a student's attendance or participation at school. Sommer and Tyburczy, in a study funded by the Kellog Public Services Research Program, (1981) found that the four factors most often mentioned as major causes for truancy were

low achievement or lack of success in school, low self-esteem, parental ineffectiveness, and the absence of penalties associated with truancy.

Although there were numerous reasons explaining why children are truant from school, there was general consensus in the literature that the underlying factor most reponsible for chronic truancy is the frustration and despair felt by the student as a result of deficient learning skills and/or inadequate social and emotional adjustment. Once the cycle of failure and truancy starts, it increases the feeling of inferiority, frustration and disinterest by the pupil, and in turn usually leads to dropping out of school.

Research provides compelling evidence that students with a record of truancy are likely to have a history of low achievement and behavior problems. A study by the California School Boards Association (1981) cited a significant correlation between regular schoól attendance and the success of children in school, and conversely, found that a major result of school absenteeism was academic failure. Students with the poorest grades had a much higher rate of absenteeism than pupils in the best grade category.

In a survey conducted by the American Association of School Administrators, (Neill 1979) over one-half of the members surveyed cited that the issue of students cutting the whole school day was a very serious problem, but only one in

five respondents said they had found effective means to cope with the situation. Wright (1976) said that in spite of recent surveys in which members of the National Association of Secondary School Principals named poor attendance as the most perplexing student problem facing school administrators, the Association reported that few studies had been conducted concerning the attendance problem. Brim, Forgety, and Sadler (1978) also stressed that there have been relatively few research investigations dealing with the causes and effects of student absenteeism.

A major reason for the lack of attention given to the issue of student truancy may be because there is a great deal of indifference in many schools as to whether some students attend or not. This attitude on the part of certain administrators is not uncommon inasmuch as chronic truants and potential dropouts usually perform unsatisfactorily academically and socially, and create the major percentage of discipline and management problems for teachers and administrators. Consequently, it is expedient to avoid referral problems by simply failing to encourage these pupils to attend school on a regular basis. Neill (1979) quoted a California State legislative official as saying, "Schools just don't seem to want to bother with kids who cause trouble."

Regardless of the factors contributing to the elementary and secondary school attendance problem locally, statewide, or

nationally, it is evident from surveying relevant literature that the situation is serious and complex, with no single remedy or solution.

The Thrust Of The Practicum

This practicum addressed the complicated issue of student truancy through the implementation of a comprehensive intervention strategy designed to encourage each target student to improve school attendance, academic performance and attitude. The "dual-thrust" project involved two groups, one at the junior-senior high school level consisting of 78 students, and one at the elementary school level involving 69 students. Activities were divided into two periods, the first for the junior-senior high school group extended from February 1, 1985 to January 31, 1987, and the second for the elementary school group from September 3, 1985 through January 31, 1987.

The information in the following chapter focuses on the scope and extent of the student absentee problem in the AuSable Valley Central School District at the time the practicum was planned. The data clearly indicate why it was important to introduce a remedial program designed to improve an undesirable situation.

Chapter 2

A HIGH LEVEL OF TRUANCY AND UNSATISFACTORY ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT FOR TARGET STUDENTS

School Officials Are Alarmed Over The High Level Of Truancy And Unsatisfactory Academic Achievement

For several years, teachers, administrators and members of the Board of Education had been alarmed over the high level of truancy at all grade levels. There was also concern about the growing number of students with poor achievement and multiple failures, especially at the junior-senior high school level. This concern was a recurring agenda item at faculty meetings with general agreement that policies and programs conceived to correct the situation must be developed, implemented and evaluated. While the absence figures did not approach the extremely high rates experienced by many urban areas, the local level of attendance compared unfavorably with attendance in neighboring districts and there was a strong desire to reverse the trend.

An inspection of the 1982-83 attendance record for the district revealed a yearly attendance ratio of 92.7 percent. The attendance ratio placed the district slightly below the tenth percentile in relation to attendance on a statewide basis. On May 7, 1984, as the result of a poor attendance record for the 1982-83 school year, the district was notified by the State Education Department that AuSable Valley was eligible for a financial allocation of $17,659 to be used to improve at-

tendance. (See Appendix p.142.) The district attendance ratio for 1983-84 was 92.8 percent, slightly higher than the previous school year, but clearly revealing a continuing unsatisfactory level of attendance.

Scope Of The Attendance And Academic Achievement Problem

The data contained on the following several pages provide attendance information for each of the three schools in the district and clearly indicate the seriousness and scope of the problem at the time the practicum was conceived and implemented. Attendance figures shown are for students in grades one through 12.

Table 1 charts the 1982-83 attendance profile by grade level for AuSable Forks Elementary School. Many students attending the school come from homes where the total income places the family at or near poverty level. The attendance ratio at the school was historically lower than the other elementary school in the district.

Table 1

AuSable Forks Elementary School

Attendance Profile for 1982-83

Grade Level	Aggregate Possible Days of Attendance	Aggregate Days of Attendance	Attendance %
1	4,516	4,047	89.6
2	5,412	5,007	92.5
3	5,200	4,896	94.2

Table 1 (continued)

Grade Level	Aggregate Possible Days of Attendance	Aggregate Days of Attendance	Attendance %
4	4,030	3,848	95.4
5	7,140	6,736	94.3
6	5,089	4,789	94.1
Average Attendance			93.4

Table 2 details the 1983-84 attendance profile by grade level for AuSable Forks Elementary School. The attendance pattern was similar to the preceding school year, although the 1983-84 figure was somewhat higher.

Table 2

AuSable Forks Elementary School

Attendance Profile for 1983-84

Grade Level	Aggregate Possible Days of Attendance	Aggregate Days of Attendance	Attendance %
1	6,701	6,273	93.6
2	4,979	4,651	93.4
3	5,117	4,733	92.5
4	6,387	6,074	95.1
5	5,505	5,218	94.8
6	6,491	6,110	94.1
Average Attendance			94.0

Tables three and four document the attendance figures for the 1982-83 and 1983-84 school years respectively for Keeseville Elementary School. Although the attendance ratio in the school was the highest in the district, the record still shows the need for improvement.

Table 3

Keeseville Elementary School

Attendance Profile for 1982-83

Grade Level	Aggregate Possible Days of Attendance	Aggregate Days of Attendance	Attendance %
1	13,865	13,173	95.0
2	10,558	10,094	95.6
3	12,762	12,202	95.6
4	13,761	13,076	95.0
5	13,955	13,245	94.9
6	13,550	12,805	94.5
Average Attendance			95.1

Table 4

Keeseville Elementary School

Attendance Profile for 1983-84

Grade Level	Aggregate Possible Days of Attendance	Aggregate Days of Attendance	Attendance %
1	12,479	11,810	94.6
2	12,576	11,935	94.9

Table 4 (continued)

Grade Level	Aggregate Possible Days of Attendance	Aggregate Days of Attendance	Attendance %
3	9,343	9,003	96.4
4	12,479	11,887	95.3
5	12,272	11,624	94.7
6	13,134	12,414	94.5
Average Attendance			95.0

Tables five and six below contain information on 1982-83 and 1983-84 attendance at the Clintonville Junior-Senior High School for grades seven through twelve. Inspection of the tables reveals that the attendance ratio was considerably lower for the Junior-Senior High School than for either of the two elementary schools.

Table 5

Clintonville Junior-Senior High School

Attendance Profile for 1982-83

Grade Level	Aggregate Possible Days of Attendance	Aggregate Days of Attendance	Attendance %
7	27,005	25,068	92.8
8	22,783	20,936	91.9
9	32,307	29,289	90.7
10	23,274	21,428	92.1

Table 5 (continued)

Grade Level	Aggregate Possible Days of Attendance	Aggregate Days of Attendance	Attendance %
11	17,584	16,233	92.3
12	23,250	20,689	89.0
Average Attendance			91.4

Table 6

Clintonville Junior-Senior High School

Attendance Profile for 1983-84

Grade Level	Aggregate Possible Days of Attendance	Aggregate Days of Attendance	Attendance %
7	26,215	24,236	92.4
8	22,580	20,690	91.6
9	29,046	26,262	90.4
10	21,610	19,854	91.8
11	17,047	15,978	93.7
12	21,906	19,879	90.7
Average Attendance			91.7

A comparison of attendance percentages, Table 7, was made with four neighboring school districts for the 1983-84 school year. Although these districts do not have as many disadvantaged pupils as AuSable Valley, they were selected for comparison because of their geographical proximity to the school dis-

trict. All feed students into the same regional vocational occupational school and share certain special educational facilities which are funded by the component schools in the area. The comparison shows that AuSable Valley had the poorest attendance of the schools.

Table 7

Comparative Regional School District

Attendance for 1983-84

School District	Attendance %
AuSable Valley Central School	92.8
Peru Central School	94.9
Plattsburgh City School	94.6
Saranac Central School	95.0
Willsboro Central School	93.8

Tables eight and nine record the confidential attendance profile during the past two years for students attending the two elementary schools who were absent 17 or more school days during the 1983-84 school year. The tables show a higher than expected grade point average for the basic academic subjects of mathematics, reading, language arts, science and social studies. This is primarily the result of homogeneous grouping, with grading determined in relation to individual effort and

ability. The tables also include results of the Metropolitan Achievement Tests administered in May, 1984, which indicate that 44 of the elementary school target students scored below the 50th percentile in either the reading or mathematics part of the test. Many students scored below the 50th percentile in both sub-tests. The results of the achievement tests appear to support the findings of the California School Boards Association (1981) study indicating a significant correlation between regular school attendance and the success of children in school.

Table 8

AuSable Forks Elementary School Attendance Pattern, Grade Point Averages, and Metropolitan Achievement Test Results for Target Students

Grade Level 1984-85	Student Number	1st Sem. Grade Avg. 1983-84+	Gr.Avg. for 1983-84+	Ach Test %-5/84 Rd	Ach Test %-5/84 Math	Days of Absences 1982-83	Days of Absences 1983-84	Days of Absences 1st Sem. 1983-84
1	1	K**	K**	10	64	*	27	17
1	2	K	K	40	04	*	41	20
1	3	K	K	01	43	*	29	14
1	4	K	K	72	64	*	32	20
1	5	K	K	02	05	*	23	9
1	6	K	K	24	20	*	24	14
1	7	K	K	66	34	*	17	10
2	8	87.25	86.50	88	50	33	24	6
2	9	77.00	75.00	58	52	76	68	36
2	10	88.25	87.50	96	64	22	23	13
2	11	77.30	77.00	60	50	0*	17	11
2	12	78.25	79.50	20	80	68	48	29
2	13	85.75	86.50	82	42	13	23	12
2	14	77.00	78.60	62	32	32	22	11

*Not enrolled. +Passing grade - 75. **Non-graded in kindergarten.

Table 9 (continued)

Grade Level 1984-85	Student Number	1st Sem. Grade Avg. 1983-84+	Gr.Avg. for 1983-84+	Ach Test %-5/84 Rd	Ach Test %-5/84 Math	Days of Absences 1982-83	Days of Absences 1983-84	Days of Absences 1st Sem. 1983-84
1	32	K	K	40	64	*	30	14
1	33	K	K	66	26	*	25	11
1	34	K	K	20	34	*	25	13
1	35	K	K	01	02	*	38	26
1	36	K	K	08	16	*	22	13
1	37	K	K	02	26	*	25	8
1	38	K	K	24	44	*	25	21
1	39	K	K	72	58	*	25	6
2	40	72.80	71.80	20	22	25	18	12
2	41	72.00	69.80	12	04	16	18	6
2	42	76.70	76.80	80	17	0*	19	10
2	43	71.20	68.25	16	22	20	26	18
2	44	75.50	76.80	65	69	44	26	15
2	45	85.00	85.00	58	76	19	33	20
2	46	97.60	92.20	77	82	20	32	6
3	47	96.40	97.20	99	99	10	20	10
3	48	88.80	88.90	66	80	13	20	9
3	49	87.10	86.80	90	72	25	54	28
3	50	69.70	70.35	64	40	41	37	11
3	51	79.30	79.80	52	54	11	19	5
4	52	77.90	72.80	40	23	12	28	8
4	53	80.60	80.90	46	58	11	17	10
4	54	90.70	90.35	78	74	24	30	14
4	55	93.00	94.10	99	94	17	18	15
5	56	72.10	72.10	17	16	0*	32	13
5	57	89.33	89.50	56	90	8	18	12
5	58	90.40	91.07	76	75	0*	24	12
5	59	80.50	79.25	60	65	6	19	6
5	60	77.70	78.85	74	27	12	34	15

Table 9 (continued)

Grade Level 1984-85	Student Number	1st Sem. Grade Avg. 1983-84+	Gr.Avg. for 1983-84+	Ach Test %-5/84 Rd	Ach Test %-5/84 Math	Days of Absences 1982-83	Days of Absences 1983-84	Days of Absences 1st Sem. 1983-84
6	61	78.10	80.50	72	46	19	21	13
6	62	87.80	86.70	80	70	15	21	6
6	63	81.00	77.95	18	14	14	21	7
6	64	71.60	72.20	14	52	7	20	5
6	65	87.00	85.19	82	84	7	21	9
6	66	68.80	67.55	20	02	24	31	4
6	67	80.00	80.56	36	48	27	18	10
6	68	87.38	85.06	24	54	5	19	4
6	69	81.00	84.35	44	60	21	36	16
Total							1068	481

*Not enrolled. +Passing grade - 75. **Non-graded in kindergarten.

The following tables detail the two-year attendance record for Clintonville Junior-Senior High School students in grades seven through ten who missed 20 or more days during the 1983-84 school year. The information clearly reveals that the problem of absenteeism was much more pronounced at the high school level. The tables also list the 1983-84 grade point average for the required subjects of social studies and English and the results the Metropolitan Achievement Tests administered in May of 1984. In most cases, academic achievement was unsatisfactory, with 24 students having a grade average below passing. Additionally, 52 students scored below the 50th percentile on either the reading or mathematics part of the achievement tests. Many students scored below the 50th percentile on both tests.

Table 10

Clintonville Junior-Senior High School Attendance Pattern, Grade Point Averages, and Metropolitan Achievement Test Results for Target Students in Grades 7 & 8

Grade Level 1984-85	Student Number	Grade Average for 1983-84+	Ach Test %-5/84 Rd	Ach Test %-5/84 Math	Days of Absences 1982-83	Days of Absences 1983-84
7	70	87.00	14	50	15	20
7	71	61.50	14	26	9	34
7	72	53.00	16	24	35	41
7	73	57.50	14	11	57	45
7	74	82.00	11	36	4	20
7	75	58.00	44	50	25	28
7	76	65.00	22	22	39	48
7	77	39.00	06	38	39	54
7	78	92.50	70	82	6	20
7	79	16.50	32	82	11	57
7	80	62.50	55	72	33	39
7	81	78.50	50	64	21	21
7	82	75.50	—	—	0*	20
7	83	72.50	50	28	27	21
8	84	85.50	80	96	7	20
8	85	72.00	24	46	11	22
8	86	67.50	60	54	31	24
8	87	60.00	16	18	15	36
8	88	80.00	98	82	*	20
8	89	66.00	12	14	21	21
8	90	67.50	24	50	24	42
8	91	48.00	40	38	23	27
8	92	74.00	01	06	16	23
8	93	68.50	34	66	16	23
8	94	57.00	23	26	*	23
8	95	63.00	11	42	*	41
8	96	82.50	11	36	7	25
8	97	78.00	30	66	20	22
8	98	71.50	23	16	18	23

*Not enrolled. +Passing grade - 65.

Table 10 (continued)

Grade Level 1984-85	Student Number	Grade Average for 1983-84+	Ach Test %-5/84 Rd	Ach Test %-5/84 Math	Days of Absences 1982-83	Days of Absences 1983-84
8	99	68.50	58	32	25	22
8	100	57.50	32	66	14	45
8	101	64.00	66	88	27	31
8	102	65.00	34	66	13	23
8	103	59.50	22	74	16	25
8	104	55.00	23	44	12	41
8	105	70.00	16	04	23	26
8	106	60.00	36	48	15	20
Total					675	1093

*Not enrolled. +Passing grade - 65.

Table 11

Clintonville Junior-Senior High School Attendance Pattern, Grade Point Averages, and Metropolitan Achievement Test Results for Target Students in Grades 9 & 10

Grade Level 1984-85	Student Number	Grade Average for 1983-84+	Ach Test %-5/84 Rd	Ach Test %-5/84 Math	Days of Absences 1982-83	Days of Absences 1983-84
9	107	76.50	86	94	36	31
9	108	72.50	18	20	16	23
9	109	65.00	82	88	24	29
9	110	62.00	18	14	22	34
9	111	74.50	98	58	24	22
9	112	78.00	86	36	24	24
9	113	83.00	23	48	24	37
9	114	67.50	04	10	20	27

*Not enrolled. +Passing grade - 65.

Table 11 (continued)

Grade Level 1984-85	Student Number	Grade Average for 1983-84+	Ach Test %-5/84 Rd	Ach Test %-5/84 Math	Days of Absences 1982-83	Days of Absences 1983-84
9	115	73.00	02	16	16	26
9	116	71.00	78	58	21	22
9	117	64.00	76	82	23	20
9	118	69.00	34	50	39	25
9	119	90.00	99	98	22	21
9	120	64.50	23	72	26	25
9	121	73.50	82	68	29	33
9	122	77.50	30	62	9	22
9	123	60.00	30	62	*	33
9	124	69.50	38	72	11	26
9	125	67.00	78	72	20	26
9	126	76.00	56	36	7	20
9	127	65.00	20	24	5	43
10	128	81.00	96	90	43	24
10	129	75.00	94	62	29	42
10	130	67.00	82	88	24	29
10	131	78.00	34	40	20	27
10	132	78.50	36	72	16	26
10	133	60.00	96	64	8	24
10	134	73.50	34	80	20	28
10	135	71.00	34	82	*	30
10	136	78.00	78	82	5	20
10	137	64.50	60	28	28	32
10	138	80.00	96	60	25	23
10	139	68.00	24	12	16	30
10	140	75.00	56	54	19	23
10	141	67.50	56	50	3	24
10	142	63.00	20	40	24	62
10	143	71.00	36	36	14	23
10	144	72.00	56	60	19	25
10	145	53.00	06	34	17	22
10	146	65.00	34	36	12	29
10	147	70.00	60	68	20	20
Total					780	1132

*Not enrolled. +Passing grade - 65.

During September, 1984, as a result of concern about the continuing student attendance and achievement problem, the writer asked 1983-84 teachers of project students to complete a screening form to identify behavioral characteristics which may contribute to poor attendance and/or academic failure. The screening form used was developed for the federally funded Multiple Alternatives for Secondary Students and Teachers Project at Rush-Henrietta Central School in New York State. (See Appendix p.143.)

In order to satisfy Title IV-C validation requirements for the Rush-Henrietta project, the District Committee on Disaffected Youth developed the survey and tested same. The committee reported a high correlation between the results of the survey and the actual academic and cumulative personal records of the target students in the project. Additionally, teachers were asked to complete the survey for a control group within the larger student population. Comparison of the results of the survey for the target students and the control group lead to the conclusion that the instrument provided logical and valid information.

Results of the AuSable Valley survey revealed the following:

. 34 students in grades one through six were identified as exhibiting a pattern of poor motivation or refusal to work in class throughout the school year.

. 26 students in grades one through six were identi-

tified as being withdrawn, not interested in group activities, or unable to maintain satisfactory relationship with peers. To be considered withdrawn, one must have exhibited a continuing pattern of being isolated from participation in group activities.

- 24 students in grades seven through ten were cited by one or more teachers as being disruptive in class. To be considered a disruptive student, one must have presented persistant discipline or management problems.
- 35 students in grades seven through ten were identified as exhibiting a persistent pattern of poor motivation or refusal to work in class.

Results of the survey indicated that a significant percentage of students identified as having poor attendance and/or achievement records also exhibited behavioral characteristics generally thought to contribute to absenteeism and poor academic performance.

The results of the negative potentials identified for the target students correlated closely with their poor attendance and/or academic record. For example, of the 24 students in high school identified as being disruptive in class, 16 of them had a 1983-84 grade point average below 70. Of the 34 elementary students identified as exhibiting a pattern of poor motivation or refusal to work in class throughout the school year, 22 of them had missed 25 or more days of school during the

1983-84 school year.

The referral form surveys were distributed directly to school personnel and instructions were included to insure the reliability of responses and timely return of forms.

Past Efforts To Solve The Problem

Over the past few years, the writer convened many meetings of administrators, guidance counselors, attendance personnel, and teachers for the purpose of discussing: (a) students with a high incidence of absenteeism; (b) students dropping out of school; and (c) composite reports on students failing courses and requiring remedial assistance. Administrators were requested to carefully monitor students with a record of chronic absenteeism, and the attendance officer was directed to increase the number of home visitations.

The administrative staff, especially at the elementary level, had attempted to improve communications with habitually absent students and their parents. In addition to personal conversations with the students, numerous phone calls were made to the students' homes and letters were sent to parents. (See Appendix pp.144-7.) At the junior-senior high school level, guidance counselors were asked to use individual and group counseling techniques to encourage chronic truants to alter negative attitudes and behavior.

At the time of intervention, efforts to improve a persistent, undesirable situation had resulted in limited success.

It should be noted that at the junior-senior high school level, the administration had not always made a conscientious effort to improve the attendance of certain pupils. This attitude on the part of administrators is not uncommon inasmuch as chronic absentees and potential dropouts usually perform unsatisfactorily academically and socially, and create the major percentage of discipline or management problems for teachers and administrators. Consequently, it is expedient to avoid referral problems by simply failing to encourage these pupils to attend school on a regular basis.

The school district staff did not have sufficient vision to develop an appropriate, comprehensive program designed to identify chronic truants and provide intervention activities devised to encourage these students to attend school regularly and to improve their academic achievement.

Social And Economic Characteristics Of The Community

Many pupils residing in AuSable Valley Central School District are from low socioeconomic-level families. Some families have low aspiration levels for their children, and the children lack internal and external motivation. Consequently, a significant number of students reflect characteristics generally associated with truancy and poor academic achievement. Specifically, many children are from:

1. Low income families. According to the 1980 Census of Population and Housing, the median household income

for district residents was $13,429. (See Appendix p.140.)

2. Families where poverty and welfare assistance is a normal and acceptable way of life. The 1980 Census of Population and Housing indicates that more than ten percent of the families had incomes below the established poverty level. (See Appendix p.141.) Many more families had incomes slightly above the poverty level with limited opportunity and/or motivation to improve their quality of life.
3. Families with a poor self-image and where education is not considered important.
4. Single parent homes or homes where a parent has remarried and two families have blended together.
5. Homes where they are neglected and abused.

As a result of the above, many children are not motivated for school, have little self-confidence academically, repeat grades, do not attend school regularly, and drop out when they reach sixteen. Additionally, these students often have lengthy management records which usually include probation and suspension.

Chapter 3

DEFINING DESIRED OUTCOMES RESULTING FROM INTERVENTION STRATEGY

At the time of intervention, the existing number of students who had poor attendance records and low grades concerned teachers, principals and members of the board of education. The following terminal objectives were designed to act as catalysts for the development of programs conceived for the purpose of improving school attendance and student achievement:

Group I - Junior-Senior High School

a. As a result of practicum intervention strategies implemented during the period February 1, 1985 to January 31, 1986, the number of full days of absence for target students remaining enrolled in the junior-senior high school would decrease by 12.5 percent as compared to the same period of time during the 1983-84 school year.

b. As a result of practicum intervention strategies implemented during the period February 1, 1986 to January 31, 1987, the number of full days of absence for target students remaining enrolled in the junior-senior high school would decrease by 25 percent as compared to the same period of time during the 1983-84 school year.

c. In comparison of individual attendance records for the period February 1, 1985 - January 31, 1986 (two semesters) to similar records for the 1983-84 school year, 80 percent of the students in the target group would show a decline of 30 percent or more in their rate of absenteeism.

d. In comparison of individual attendance records for the period February 1, 1986 - January 31, 1987 (two semesters) to similar records for the 1983-84 school year, 80 percent of the students in the target group would show a decline of 40 percent or more in their rate of absenteeism.

e. In comparison of grade point averages between the 1983-84 school year and the combined averages of the second semester of 1984-85 and first semester of the 1985-86 school year, 40 percent of the students in the target population would improve their grades by two or more percentage points.

f. In comparison of grade point averages between the 1983-84 school year and the combined averages of the second semester of 1985-86 and first semester of the 1986-87 school year, 50 percent of the students in the target population would improve their grades by three or more percentage points.

Group II - Elementary Schools

g. As a result of practicum intervention strategies implemented during the period September 1, 1985 to January 31, 1986, the number of full days of absence for target students remaining enrolled in the elementary schools would decrease by 12.5 percent as compared to the same period of time during the 1983-84 school year.

h. As a result of practicum intervention strategies implemented during the period February 1, 1986 to January 31, 1987, the number of full days of absence for target students remaining enrolled in the elementary schools would decrease by 25 percent as compared to the same period of time during the 1983-84 school year.

i. In comparison of individual attendance records for the period September 1, 1985 - January 31, 1986 (one semester) to similar records for the first semester of the 1983-84 school year, 80 percent of the students in the target group would show a decline of 30 percent or more in their rate of absenteeism.

j. In comparison of individual attendance records for the period February 1, 1986 - January 31, 1987, (two semesters) to similar records for the 1983-84 school year, 80 percent of the students in the target group would show a decline of 40 percent or more in their rate of absenteeism.

k. In comparison of grade point averages between the first semester of the 1983-84 school year and the

first semester of the 1985-86 school year, 20 percent of the students in the target population would improve their grades by two or more percentage points.

l. In comparison of grade point averages between the 1983-84 school year and the combined averages of the second semester of 1985-86 and first semester of the 1986-87 school year, 40 percent of the students in the target population would improve their grades by two or more percentage points.

m. In comparison of Metropolitan Achievement Test results between May, 1984 and May, 1986, 50 percent of the students in the elementary school target population would improve their percentile rank by eight points on either the reading or mathematics test.

All anticipated results and specific levels of improvement appeared to be rational and attainable as written. The detailed evaluation of the practicum provides evidence that most goals and objectives were achieved as projected.

Chapter 4

DEVELOPING A PROGRAM DESIGNED TO COUNTERACT STUDENT TRUANCY AND IMPROVE ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

Programs Designed To Reduce Student Truancy And Improve Achievement

While surveying relevant literature, the writer learned that nationally, many programs had been introduced by educators in an effort to contain truancy and improve academic performance in both our elementary and secondary schools, although most efforts reported were at the high school level. The techniques employed represented varying educational philosophies and community situations. A number of plans centered on punitive or disciplinary measures to keep students in school, while some placed the burden of attendance primarily on the student and parent with little support from the school. However, most programs appeared to be based on alternative educational approaches with unique pupil support systems, including some type of expanded counseling strategy.

Alternative school programs were varied and developed as separate projects or as supplements to existing school organizations. Most alternative projects provided some type of special student support through individualized instruction and counseling, coupled with a curriculum relevant to the needs and interests of the student.

The literature described a number of research findings on alternative approaches and strategies used to address the problem of truancy in elementary and secondary schools. In most cases, where schools initiated an absentee reduction program, the attempt was to alter the existing school curriculum or the student's attitude toward school and education. Some programs were narrow in scope, while others were comprehensive and attacked both ends of the problem at the same time.

One such comprehensive approach described was Project Intercept, a positive alternative to pupil suspension and truancy, developed at Roosevelt High School in Ossining, New York and described in Educational Programs That Work. (1983) The project provided a separate academic program within the school for target students, including placing them in classes with an approximate student-teacher ratio of one to 15. In addition to modifying the school program, there was emphasis upon the importance of counseling and communications techniques in changing student attitudes.

Sentelle (1980) reported on the success of an innovative project introduced in Elizabethtown, Tennessee. An alternative program for chronic high school truants was developed on the premise that it would be beneficial to have target students meet in a location apart from the regular school. The students assigned there numbered between ten to 20, took assignments from their regular high school teachers, but had only one teacher

throughout the entire day. The major emphasis was upon counseling, individual instruction and improving academic performance.

The 1983 edition of the National Diffusion Network Catalog, Educational Programs That Work, cited a number of programs validated as being successful in encouraging truants and potential dropouts to stay in school. One such program was the Alternative Learning Project (ALP) in Providence, Rhode Island, a community-based alternative to traditional school, stressing basic skills and career education for high school students. (1983) The program focused on developing basic skills on an individual basis with an emphasis on continuous personal counseling. Extensive evaluations of ALP showed that the project had been effective in reducing the absentee rate as well as improving student attitudes toward school.

Unger (1978) discussed a truancy abatement project at Sunnyside Junior-High School in Tucson, Arizona that stressed individualized counseling in an attempt to teach students how to succeed in school. After an initial skills assessment, the student was given a prescription program to help him or her acquire necessary academic skills. The goal was to help the student succeed academically and make school a less frustrating place, thereby increasing the student's attendance.

A number of schools claimed successful results for alternative evening school programs. One such program was described

by W. Ivan Cendese of Valley High School in Midvale, Utah. (1979) Target students were given the option of attending classes from 3:00 P.M. to 9:00 P.M. on Monday through Thursday, with a flexible schedule and open campus concept.

Underwood (1980) stated that ESEA Title IV funds were used to develop an attendance education program for 40 selected students at Wolcott High School in Wolcott, Connecticut. The program was designed to help disaffected high school students improve their self-concept and to increase attendance. The project focused heavily on individualized instruction, intensive counseling, and constant parent communications. There were many similar programs cited in the literature, most of them claiming success in reducing truancy and improving student grades and attitude.

Oden (1978) claimed successful results for a reward-oriented approach to reduce truancy at Brownsville Junior High School in Miami, Florida. The original purpose of the program was to improve average daily attendance at the school to 95 percent or better as compared to a previous attendance average of 86.8 percent. The plan involved various tangible rewards such as special dinners and t-shirts for pupils maintaining good attendance.

There were many programs designed to counteract truancy and absenteeism which were based on a policy of punishing identified truants. Bartlett, (1978) representing the Iowa State Department of Education, prepared a representative model policy for

Iowa school districts to consider. Essentially, the premise was that school districts should demand responsible excuses for absences and that disciplinary action should be considered for unexcused absences. The focus of the recommended policy seemed to be on imposing penalties for unexcused absences; penalties such as probation, detention, or suspension. Very little was said about modifying school programs or communications techniques to change student attitude. This policy was representative of programs based on a system of punishment, including suspension and expulsion of chronic truants.

Phillips (1978) discussed the success of a comprehensive reward-to-punishment type attendance improvement program implemented in the public school system of Savannah, Georgia. A detailed project was designed to deal with the several dimensions of the truancy problem. The punitive part of the plan stated that all truancy cases for students of compulsory school age be referred to visiting teachers for legal action where necessary. Students 16 years of age and older were threatened with expulsion unless they established regular attendance patterns. The evaluation of the first year of the program revealed an increase in attendance of over four percentage points.

In some heavily populated areas, success was claimed for cooperative efforts to contain truancy, involving the community, school, and law enforcement officials. The National School Resource Network described one such program, Operation Stay-in-

School: A Truancy Abatement Program (OSIS) in Fresno County, California. (1979) The program was originally developed by the United States Department of Justice for the purpose of reducing student truancy before it diminishes the value of the student's education, leads to other problems and reduces the school district's revenue. In this project, truants, upon being apprehended by police, were taken to an OSIS reception center for counseling by attendance personnel, and then parents were asked to return them to school.

Research indicated that most truancy abatement plans were developed at the high school level. However, there were a number of creative approaches aimed at elementary age truants. The California School Boards Association described a successful project conducted in Del Rey Woods Elementary School in the Monterey Peninsula School District, Monterey, California. (1981) A "school-within-a-school" program was implemented to prevent truancy and operated on the premise that a major factor responsible for illegal school absenteeism was continued school failure. Target students were placed in three classes according to their grades; K-one, two-three or four-six. They worked individually or in small groups at their own level, with an emphasis on flexibility, parent involvement, creativity and open dialogue.

Bamber (1979) commented on a simple, but interesting and successful elementary school program to reduce truancy devel-

oped by the Parent Teachers Association at South Range Elementary School in Derry, New Hampshire. The two major ingredients of the program provided for: (1) teacher responsibility for phoning parents to seek the reason for a pupil's absence; and (2) a system of careful record keeping, performed by volunteers, to record and monitor each pupil's absence.

Many districts discussed efforts to reduce truancy and absenteeism by utilizing computerized telephone systems. In most cases, the principal recorded a message on a recording machine and the computer dialed parents at a specified hour, usually in the evening. The Executive Educator (1983) discussed the success of a program in six Chicago schools where systems were installed. After conducting a tryout in the fall of 1982, school attendance increased from 78.8 percent to 85.6 percent, an extremely significant increase.

Programs Considered For Replication

The writer examined a number of programs implemented by educators for the purpose of counteracting truancy and absenteeism in elementary and secondary schools. The approaches used in addressing a very complex problem represented a variety of educational philosophies and local situations. Several school systems reported success with punitive or restrictive plans that relied primarily on administrative and disciplinary techniques to achieve the goal of controlling truancy and absenteeism. This solution was considered but rejected be-

cause the writer believed that parents of most target students would continue the common practice of lying about the reason why their children were not in school. It should be noted, that unlike urban and heavily populated areas, most children truant from AuSable Valley remain at or in close proximity to their homes.

Project Intercept, a positive alternative to pupil suspension and truancy at Roosevelt High School in Ossining, New York, was seriously considered as a means of encouraging students to attend school regularly. The project provided an alternative academic program within the school for target students, including placing them in special classes with a small pupil-teacher ratio. The traditional school program was modified with emphasis upon the importance of counseling and communications techniques for changing student attitudes.

This approach was contemplated but rejected because too many people, including some teachers, would consider that the truant was being rewarded for unacceptable behavior. The counseling and communications technique approach would be acceptable to most people connected with the district, but difficulty would be encountered in attempting to establish special classes with a low student-teacher ratio.

The truancy abatement programs at Sunnyside Junior High School in Tucson, Arizona, and Wolcott High School in Wolcott, Connecticut, both stressed individual counseling in attempting

to help students remain and succeed in school. Remedial prescription programs were developed for target students with the goal of helping them acquire necessary skills, thereby improving academic performance. This approach appeared logical and rather inexpensive to implement, but the writer concluded that it could only be successful if the staff members involved in such a project were caring, concerned, and capable of developing empathy for both the student and the student's family.

After surveying several of the many methods employed to combat truancy, the writer concluded that the most successful remedial program to address the problem locally would be one based on an intervention strategy focusing on a strong pupil personnel model designed to meet student needs and improve attitudes and behavior. In that light, the writer chose to develop a project based on a guidance and pupil personnel support approach, emphasizing personal counseling and individualized diagnostic-prescriptive educational plans. The program, similar to the projects described in the preceding paragraph, called for special pupil personnel staff to undertake the combined roles of monitor, learning facilitator and counselor for target students. Great importance was placed on creating a highly interactive relationship between the student and professional, involving many counseling sessions and home visitations.

Considering the failure of past administrative efforts to improve attendance, especially at the junior-senior high school

level, the writer decided to use extreme care in selecting staff members to participate in the project who would accept responsibility for doing whatever was necessary to help students stay in school and improve grades.

Determining The Intervention Strategy

The strategy for this program was developed after reviewing literature germane to the topic. Literature searches were conducted through the Educational Resources Information Center with the assistance of the resource center staff at the State University College, Plattsburgh, New York. The writer also surveyed other materials that focused on the extent of the problem, the significant causes of the problem, and the efforts to counteract them.

The major dimensions of the selected strategy combined the initial skills assessment and diagnostic-prescriptive concept of the truancy abatement program at Sunnyside Junior-Senior High School in Tucson, Arizona with the ESEA Title IV project at Wolcott High School in Wolcott, Connecticut, which emphasized individualized instruction, intensive counseling and constant parent communications.

With the preceding in mind, the two-year practicum was developed to focus upon a concerted effort to improve attendance and academic achievement in grades one through ten, at the time of initial intervention, on a district-wide basis. The scope of the task was such that the writer initiated and developed

a "dual-thrust" project involving two groups, one at the junior-senior high school level and one at the elementary school level. The activity period for the junior-senior high school group extended from February 1, 1985 to January 31, 1987 and the elementary school group period started September 3, 1985, and ended January 31, 1987.

Junior-Senior High School Student Support/Home-School Liaison Committee - Group 1

A committee appointed by the project manager met during the first week of January, 1985 to discuss students in grades seven through ten who exhibited a continuing pattern of excessive truancy. The committee, referred to as the Junior-Senior High School Student Support/Home-School Liaison Committee, consisted of six teachers, two counselors, and one assistant principal.

This number of committee members permitted each professional to work with nine students, the pupil-teacher ratio necessary due to financial limitations. The writer believed that the success of the project depended primarily upon the staff involved. In this regard, each person selected for the committee was a professional who could function in the role of advisor, consultant, and friend to the student. Great care was taken in selecting committee members who had the ability to develop a warm and caring relationship with each student as well as an empathy for the feelings of the student and the student's

family.

The Junior-Senior High School Student Support/Home-School Liaison Committee was expected to work with target students over a two-year period extending from February 1, 1985 through January 31, 1987.

An important goal of intervention strategy was the creation of an academic environment emphasizing success for project students while decreasing frustration, failure and alienation. Committee members were encouraged to help target students: (1) develop confidence and self-esteem; (2) remain motivated; (3) stay on tasks; (4) improve basic skills; and (5) develop an appreciation for education. To achieve these goals, the committee identified alternative forms of instruction, recommended appropriate curriculum, or introduced other options designed to encourage the student to attend school on a regular basis and perform at ability level.

Elementary Schools Student Support/Home-School Liaison Committee - Group II

A committee appointed by the writer met during the first week of September, 1985 to discuss students in grades two through six who exhibited a continuing pattern of excessive truancy. The committee was referred to as the Elementary Schools Student Support/Home-School Liaison Committee and consisted of six elementary school teachers, one elementary school administrator and an elementary school counselor. The number

services within the school with new and innovative support services of professional staff. Intervention activities were devised to improve attendance, make the educational program more relevant and meaningful, develop teacher awareness of student needs, and improve rapport with the student and the student's parents. Those selected for the committee had the ability to develop and maintain a warm, caring relationship with the student, as well as empathy for the feelings of the student and the student's family.

The Elementary Schools Student Support/Home-School Liaison Committee was expected to work with target students for three semesters, extending from September 3, 1985 through January 31, 1987.

Staff Development Plan - Group I and Group II

Staff inservice education was viewed by the writer as a critical factor in the project's overall success. It was recognized that teachers and other staff members had to be provided training in effective strategies for dealing with alienated students or students identified as possessing characteristics generally associated with academic failure and/or excessive absenteeism. Methods in modifying curriculum, discipline techniques, classroom management procedures, group dynamics, behavior modification, and counseling techniques had to be thoroughly discussed.

The project manager developed and implemented teacher-

staff training programs with emphasis on the teaching process and on the diagnostic-prescriptive individual education plan format central to the design of the project. In addition to using the services of several educational specialists from the State University College at Plattsburgh, New York, and a nationally renowned specialist from California State University, the writer contacted the directors of several Title IV-C projects validated at the national level for replication and described in Educational Programs That Work. (1983) The projects had reported success in training teachers to more effectively deal with disruptive, difficult to manage students, and students refusing to work in school. Arrangements were made for the purchase of books, manuals and materials prepared for staff development activities. (See Appendix p.206-7.) Adequate funding for the costs connected with staff development was included in the fiscal year budgets for 1984-85 through 1986-87 and is detailed in the Budget Summary listed on page 150 of the Appendix.

Obtaining Support For The Project

The writer had the major task of convincing the Board of Education that the practicum would provide the format for a strong and viable support program for those students identified as having a high truancy rate. Board of Education members were encouraged to recognize that financial resources should be made available to fund a project designed to focus on identification

of truants and for well-conceived and implemented remedial intervention strategies. It was necessary to obtain financial support for the two-year practicum in the amount of $103,480, which included funding for the new position of elementary school guidance counselor, and for salaries and fringe benefits for professional staff members involved in the project. (See Appendix pp.150-1.)

The writer had to continue soliciting support for the project from several faculty members who experienced difficulty in understanding the myriad of problems facing many children. Unfortunately, during the early part of the project, a few teachers did not appear to be interested in trying to help children deal with difficult situations at home or school. Fortunately, the members of the Student Support/Home-School Liaison Committees were able to eventually obtain an acceptable degree of cooperation from those few teachers who were inflexible in dealing with problem students.

Support and endorsement of the project had to be obtained from the two junior-senior high school administrators and the two elementary school principals. As the practicum developed, the principals worked diligently to ensure that the project was successful. The writer was impressed by the sustained support given the project by the four administrators and deeply appreciated their sincere efforts to insure that the terminal objectives were achieved. Their conscientious support did much to

help overcome initial concerns of students, parents, and staff.

It was recognized that a serious obstacle to the success of the project was the prevailing, suspicious attitude of many parents of target students toward education and those with authority in education. A number of parents had accepted poverty and dropping out of school as the normal, preferred way of life and had become somewhat skilled in obtaining various forms of welfare and social service assistance. It became evident that breaking the poverty ties with the past would be no easy task and would require a conscientious, sensitive effort. It was anticipated that some parents would refuse to support project intervention attempts and would react in a hostile manner toward any effort to encourage their children to attend school regularly and to remain in school through graduation.

Historical failure of the building administrators in improving attendance made it imperative that the writer be energetically and conscientiously involved in a visible leadership role. He accepted the major project manager and leadership responsibilities of the practicum such as: (1) insuring that all teachers and support staff were aware of the parameters and goals of the project; (2) explaining the planned intervention activities for each student; (3) obtaining cooperation from all staff to assist the committee in implementing curriculum modifications or alternative educational programs; and (4) attending committee meetings and closely monitoring all intervention activities and approaches.

Chapter 5

MAJOR ELEMENTS OF THE PLAN FOR IMPROVING ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT AND ATTENDANCE

The Foundation For The Program Design Is Established

During the first semester of the 1984-85 school year, the writer introduced an attendance improvement and dropout prevention program for selected eighth and ninth grade students at AuSable Valley Junior-Senior High School. The primary intervention strategy provided for the creation of an Attendance Review/Home-School Liaison Committe, with members of the committee interacting with target students and their parents. The program called for support for students and parents through extensive guidance and counseling activities. Emphasis was placed on improving student attitude and attendance.

The early success of the project motivated the Board of Education, administrators, and teachers to encourage the writer to develop a modified program for grades one through ten, with emphasis upon developing a unique approach designed to improve academic achievement as well as attendance. (See Appendix p.153.) As pertinent literature was surveyed in preparation for the practicum, the decision was reached to prepare a project stressing an improved system of guidance and pupil support, with emphasis on individualized diagnostic-prescriptive educational plans for student participants. The initial skills

assessment and diagnostic-prescriptive concept of the program was an extension of the original attendance improvement and dropout prevention program for seventh and eighth grade students. The strategy for the two-year project was generated compellingly as a result of the success achieved during the program designed to improve student attendance and reduce the dropout rate.

A Dual-Thrust Practicum With Activities Divided Into Two Periods

This "dual-thrust" project involved two groups, one at the junior-senior high school level consisting of 78 students and one at the elementary school level involving 69 students. Activities were divided into two periods, the first for the junior-senior high school group extended from February 1, 1985 to January 31, 1987, and the second for the elementary school group started September 3, 1985 and ended January 31, 1987.

The fundamental plan called for high involvement by the chief professional participants in the project, members of a Junior-Senior High School Student Support/Home-School Liaison Committee and an Elementary School Student Support/Home-School Liaison Committee. Committee members in each group had the responsibility of interacting with students in the combined role of teacher, consultant and friend, with emphasis on creating and sustaining a warm, caring relationship with the student and the student's family. Committee members were required to maintain regular contact with students in school and to make fre-

quent home visitations for the purpose of establishing a close working relationship with parents.

The Board of Education Supports The Project

At a meeting of the Board of Education held on Wednesday, December 12, 1984, the writer presented a detailed review of the multi-faceted two-year proposal. After limited discussion, the Board authorized $103,480 to fund the project. (See Appendix pp.150-1.) The financial resources approved included funding for the newly created position of elementary school guidance counselor, and salaries and fringe benefits for professional staff members involved in the project. Board members, impressed by the results of the attendance improvement and drop-out prevention program initiated during the fall semester of 1984-85, authorized the writer to initiate a modified program for grades one through ten at the time of initial intervention, with emphasis upon an individualized diagnostic-prescriptive approach to improve both attendance and academic achievement.

Group I - Junior-Senior High School - February 1, 1985 to January 31, 1987

The writer devoted considerable time preparing the intervention strategy and program discussed in this report. As relevant research was studied, the decision was made to develop and initiate a program emphasizing individualized instruction, intensive counseling and constant communications with students and parents. Germane to the junior-senior high school phase of

the project, the general plan was to make the Junior-Senior High School Student Support/Home-School Liaison Committee the central point of the practicum.

In early January, 1985, nine members of the professional staff were selected to serve on the committee. The committee consisted of six teachers, two guidance counselors, and one assistant principal. In selecting the committee, the writer used careful judgement to insure that each member could function in the combined role of advisor, consultant, mentor, and friend to target students. The writer recognized that the success of the project was primarily dependent upon caring, conscientious professionals who would develop and maintain empathy for the feelings of the student and the student's family.

A Detailed Orientation Program For Junior-Senior High School Committee Members

During the second week of January 1985, the writer conducted carefully planned orientation sessions for members of the Junior-Senior High School Student Support/Home-School Liaison Committee. Committee members were informed that they would have the major responsibility of implementing strategies and intervention activities during the two-year practicum. Factors influencing a pupil's decision to stay out of school were discussed, with emphasis on the fact that reasons are usually complex, and that generally, a variety of reasons combine to affect a student's attendance or participation at school.

In addition to a careful review of the objectives of the project, there was a thorough explanation of the implementation design. It was emphasized that committee members were expected to develop programs to specifically address the following goals:

- improving the student's attitude toward school --
- helping students have greater confidence and self-esteem --
- helping students recognize the importance of education --
- diagnosing the student's weaknesses and designing remedial programs -- (See Appendix pp.154-5.)
- improving the student's ability to contend with personal, social, and emotional situations identified by the profile of behavioral characteristics developed for each student -- (See Appendix p.143.)
- helping the student discover hidden attributes through positive direction and guidance --
- helping the student learn how to deal with conflict situations in school, at home, and in the community --

Additionally, committee members were informed that they must screen the attendance and cumulative records of all target students in grades seven through ten. They were directed to review referral forms entitled Identification of Students with a High Potential for Truancy and Academic Failure. (See Appendix p.143.) The forms, completed earlier by teachers, were designed to help the committee develop a profile of behavioral characteristics which may encourage truancy and prevent the student from learning and developing socially acceptable attitudes and behavior.

Committee members were informed that they would be required to meet for a minimum of two hours, after regular school hours, one day each project week during the four semesters of the practicum. They were told that the meetings would enable them to determine strategies for improving attendance and attitude of project students and would allow the discussion and preparation of written, specific individualized educational plans (IEP's) for each student in the program, following the standard format designed by the writer. (See Appendix p.155.) In developing IEP's, committee members were directed to consider recommending appropriate curriculum, alternative instructional approaches and/or other creative and innovative intervention activities which would alter the traditional relationship between the student and the school.

Committee members were notified that they would be expected to develop a system to effectively monitor progress of each target student. They were directed to make provisions for sharing of pertinent information about each student and for periodic and systematic evaluation of student progress. More specifically, committee members were directed to develop and maintain:

- a system of needs analysis for each student --
- a referral system of diagnosis and prescription in relationship to the student's IEP --
- a system of organizing background information on pupils which facilitated ongoing evaluation of the

pupil's status --

- a detailed method of coordinating all information on a student and of prescribing changes necessary to improve the student's educational program --

The writer emphasized that committee members would be expected to consensually agree to the specific assignment of approximately eight or nine target students for each member. They were requested to make frequent contact with the student and the student's family after regular school hours and on weekends. A significant amount of time was devoted to this aspect of the orientation because of the importance of the personal contact, rapport-building concept of the practicum. Committee members were instructed to insure that they had a minimum of three hours of student and/or family contact each project school week during the entire two years of the practicum. Additionally, they were asked to maintain a log for all student and/or family contacts, documenting the date, the time of contact, and pertinent anecdotal comments.

The concluding portion of the orientation session was devoted to the importance of involving community agencies such as the Champlain Valley Family Center, the Clinton and Essex Bureau of Social Services, and appropriate mental health agencies.

Additional orientation sessions were conducted in September, 1985, February, 1986 and September, 1986. The purpose of each orientation was to reemphasize the importance of committee

members maintaining close contact with both students and parents.

The Committee Reviews The Records Of Target Students

During the third and fourth week of January, 1985, the committee initiated a careful review of the records of all target students in grades seven through ten. The committee also reviewed student referral forms entitled Identification of Students With a High Potential for Truancy and Academic Failure. (See Appendix p.143.) The referral form review helped committee members better understand the behavorial characteristics which may have encouraged truancy and prevented the student from learning and developing socially acceptable attitude and behavior. Additionally, teachers were requested to provide current information on class attendance and deportment for project students. In an attempt to obtain positive and prompt teacher response, a special form was adopted for recording and detailing pertinent information on each student. (See Appendix p.156.) Upon completing the collection and review of all background information, a profile of behavorial characteristics was prepared for each student.

Committee Meetings Are Held On A Regular Basis

During the fourth week of January, 1985, the members of the committee determined that meetings should be held after regular school hours on Tuesday of each week. The assistant principal was designated chairperson for all committee meet-

ings. It was also decided that that the chairperson should prepare and distribute an agenda in advance of each meeting. Pages 157 through 161 in the Appendix contain representative agendas. The agendas found in the Appendix include reference to: (a) procedures for preparing individualized educational plans; (b) progress reports on student and parent contacts; (c) representatives of community agencies invited to meet with the committee; and (d) planning an oral report for the Board of Education.

Throughout the two-year practicum period, committee meetings were conducted in a professional manner and all members actively participated in the discussion of topics listed on the agenda. The committee often met for over two hours discussing the development of IEP's and how to best decrease the frustration, failure and alienation of a particular student. Committee members monitored student progress, discussed intervention activities, rendered support and advice, listened to concerns and suggestions for changes in strategy, and evaluated the ongoing success of the project. Additionally, they developed plans detailing ways for more effectively dealing with target students.

Committee members exhibited a sustained effort in working toward the goals and objectives of the practicum and did everything possible to insure a successful project. For example, several unique activites were planned and conducted by the com-

mittee for target students, including special mountain climbing outings in the Adirondack Mountains, and picnics on the beaches of Lake Champlain. All of these activities enabled committee members to socially interact with students in a relaxed, friend ly atmosphere and fostered a warmer student-professional relationship.

During the second year of the project, two committee members held weekly group counseling sessions for selected target students. The sessions were conducted to assist students experiencing personal adjustment problems. Groups of four to six students of the same sex would talk about how to make and maintain friends; share concerns about dating; speak about violence and abuse in the home; and discuss general points of interest. Interest was high and all students participated in lively discussions. The counseling sessions enabled students to more effectively cope with loneliness, frustration, alienation and social problems.

The Faculty Supports The Project

During the first week of February, 1985, a general meeting of faculty was convened for the purpose of reviewing the practicum and obtaining recommendations and support. Additionally, at a Superintendent's Workshop conducted on May 7, 1985, members of the Junior-Senior High School Student Support/Home-School Liaison Committee presented a two hour program on the status of the project. In addition to reviewing evaluative data,

committee members also related their experiences in dealing with target students and their parents. Difficult home conditions and unique personal problems were presented and discussed. This sharing of information was intended to help faculty better understand why certain students were resistant learners.

Additionally, periodic memorandums were distributed to faculty members encouraging their continued support of the project. A sample memorandum found on page 165 of the Appendix thanked the faculty for making the project a success and emphasized that attendance and academic performance of project students had improved measurably. In the memorandum, committee members stated "We're pleased with the results to date. If we as a committee are going to continue to function effectively, we need your continued support. We're convinced that working together can make the difference!"

The writer was impressed with the positive, supportive faculty attitude toward the project. Nearly all faculty members exhibited a sustained willingness to cooperate completely with the members of the committee. It was concluded that the high level of cooperation was due to the fact that committee members were deeply respected and admired by their fellow teachers and that there was a noticeable improvement in the attendance, behavior, and academic performance of project students.

Faculty members cooperated completely in preparing status

reports on the conduct and achievement of project students. Many faculty members attended meetings of the committee to share observations about the behavior and academic progress of students. There was a sincere, sustained attempt by teachers to be more sensitive to the needs of target students. It is significant to note the "spillover" effect which was not anticipated when the practicum was developed. Many teachers displayed increased understanding and patience in dealing with all students, and there was a renewed interactive relationship between students and teachers at all grade levels.

Individual Education Plans Are Prepared For Each Student

During February and March of 1985, the committee considered approaches and methods to improve the educational program and attendance for each target student. A critical element in accomplishing the preceding centered around the development of Individual Educational Plans (IEP's). After a training session focusing on techniques for developing IEP's, conducted by the school psychologist, IEP's were prepared for each target student. The first step was the preparation of a general summary detailing recommended educational programs, the present level of performance, and notes from the profile of behavioral characteristics which may encourage truancy. Next, an IEP was prepared identifying goals, describing educational services, and stating other relevant recommendations. Representative IEP summaries are found on pages 166 through 169 of the Appendix.

The IEP served as an important guide for helping committee members monitor the progress of each target student in comparison to stated goals and objectives. IEP's were systematically revised during the two-year intervention period whenever considered necessary to improve the educational program of the student.

In February of 1986, the writer found it necessary to conduct training sessions to help members of the committee gain an improved understanding of how to properly prepare an individual assessment of each student and then design a written individual plan for the student. In retrospect, the writer recognized that more effort should have been devoted to training committee members to prepare IEP's because some members experienced difficulty in relating to this aspect of the practicum design.

The Majority Of Students Are Pleased With The Project

When first contacted by committee members, many students had difficulty in comprehending the goals and objectives of the program. They wondered if there was a "catch" or hidden agenda, and in most cases, reluctantly agreed to cooperate. However, within a few weeks, the majority of target students appeared pleased to have staff members concerned for their welfare. It was not unusual for many students to seek out their mentors to ask for advice or just to talk. A high degree of student-committee member rapport was sustained throughout the practicum and committee members appreciated the cooperative,

enthusiastic response by target students.

Unfortunately, a few students refused to cooperate with their mentors and steadfastly resisted all attempts to establish a working relationship. In most cases, these students were approaching age 16 and intended to leave school upon reaching that age. Committee members observed that if the intervention program had been introduced at an earlier age, perhaps some of the students could have been helped.

Most Parents Cooperate With Committee Members

Committee members reported that during the initial contact with parents, there was usually concern about why the committee member was visiting their home. However, after a thorough explanation of the goals and objectives of the practicum, the majority of parents were extremely supportive and cooperative. Committee members anticipated considerable hostility and suspicion and were very pleased with the positive, supportive parent attitude. Some parents would phone committee members and invite them to their homes to discuss a particular problem or concern. Committee members were surprised to find so many single parent homes and homes where "surrogate parents" resided. It should be noted that a few parents agreed to meet the professional in the school but avoided having meetings in the home. Also, a small number of parents resisted all attempts at establishing rapport and refused to cooperate with committee members.

Formative Evaluations Reveal An Improvement In Student Achievement And Attendance

At the end of April, 1985, at the conclusion of the ten-week attendance and grading period, the committee initiated a checkpoint evaluation of the success of the project in relation to terminal objectives c and e relating to the goals of improved attendance and academic performance. The checkpoint of the program, as detailed on pages 170 through 173 of the Appendix, indicated that 49 target students improved their attendance record for the third quarter of 1984-85 in comparison to the third quarter of 1983-84. Additionally, 38 target students improved their academic grades for the third quarter of 1984-85 in comparison to the same time period for the preceding school year. (See Appendix pp. 174-7.)

At the conclusion of the 1984-85 school year, the committee again evaluated the success of the project in relation to terminal objectives c and e relating to the goals of improved attendance and academic performance. Results of the evaluation, as shown on pages 178 through 181 of the Appendix, revealed that 56 project students improved their attendance record for the second semester of 1984-85 in comparison to the second semester of the 1983-84 school year. Additionally, 44 project students improved their academic grades for the second semester of 1984-85 in comparison to the same time period for the preceding school year. (See Appendix pp.182-5.)

During the third week of June, 1985, the writer evaluated the success of the practicum in the context of improved student behavior and attitude. A continuum scale of one (no change observed) to four (considerable change observed) was provided for teacher responses. (See Appendix pp.186-7.) The majority of teachers returned completed survey forms. The results, found on pages 188 through 191 of the Appendix, revealed that 45 of the 78 target students showed considerable improvement in the estimation of one or more teachers and that 43 of the 78 target students showed moderate improvement according to one or more teachers.

The writer was surprised to note the considerable fluctuation in the way teachers rated the behavior and attitude of the same student. Certain teachers indicated that a particular student showed considerable improvement in behavior while others stated that there was little or no improvement for the student. Specifically, on page 189 of the Appendix, two teachers believed that student number 91 showed considerable improvement in behavior while three teachers indicated little or no improvement. Nevertheless, it was gratifying to learn that many students were improving their attitude and behavior as a result of intervention activities.

The positive results of each checkpoint evaluation of the practicum were encouraging. Committee members concluded that as rapport between the student/teacher and parent/teacher de-

veloped, both attendance and academic performance would continue to significantly improve. Data in the following chapter indicate that a significant number of project students did indeed continue to improve attendance and achievement as projected in the terminal objectives.

The Project Manager Meets With Representative Target Students

During special interviews conducted by the writer during the final year of the project, the majority of students showing improvement in grades and/or attendance commented that special attention and concern shown by members of the Student Support/ Home-School Liaison Committees were partly responsible for the improvement. There was general agreement by the students that other teachers seemed more attentive and helpful since the project was implemented. Most of them said they felt comfortable with their special mentors and could ask them for advice or assistance.

A few students said they appreciated the extra effort to help them but felt they would have improved their attendance and grades regardless of the project. They said they would have improved primarily as a result of added maturity, more interesting courses, and/or part-time attendance at the area occupational and technical center. Several students were not interested in discussing the project and indicated they preferred not to be singled out for special attention. They definitely disliked the idea of teachers making home visitations.

Group II - Elementary Schools - September 3, 1985 to January 31, 1987

Selection Of The Elementary Schools Student Support/Home-School Liaison Committee

In late August, 1985, seven members of the professional staff were selected to serve on the Elementary Schools Student Support/Home-School Liaison Committee. The committee consisted of six elementary school teachers, one elementary school administrator, and an elementary school guidance counselor. The counselor, recently appointed to the newly created position, was assigned the task of chairing the committee and fulfilling the mission of the practicum as detailed in the position description found on pages 148 and 149 of the Appendix. In selecting the committee, the writer used careful judgment to insure that each member could function in the combined role of advisor, consultant, mentor, and friend of elementary school target students. The fundamental diagnostic-prescriptive, humanistic design of the project called for the selection of committee members who would sincerely care about the life and welfare of the student and the student's family.

Members Of The Elementary Schools Student Support/Home-School Liaison Committee Attend An Orientation Program

During the second week of September, 1985, the writer conducted a carefully planned orientation program for members of the Elementary Schools Student Support/Home School Liaison Com-

mittee. Committee members were given the names of elementary school students selected for the project and were told that they would be expected to develop and implement unique strategies and activities designed to encourage students to attend school on a regular basis and improve their grades. Research focusing on why students fail to attend school was reviewed and data on target student attendance, academic performance, and behavior were presented and discussed.

There was a comprehensive review of the objectives of the practicum, coupled with a thorough explanation of the implementation design. Committee members were encouraged to interact with target students for the purpose of developing and maintaining rapport with them. Emphasis was placed upon the importance of a highly interactive relationship between the student and committee member, including numerous counseling sessions and home visitations. Committee members were informed that they would be expected to develop programs to address the following goals of helping students to:

. manifest a positive change in attitude and behavior --

. develop greater confidence and improved self-esteem --

. be motivated to be successful in school --

. perform at expected potential level --

. recognize the importance of education --

Additionally, committee members were told that they must screen the records of all project students and would be expec-

ted to meet for a minimum of two hours, after regular school hours, one day each project week for the remaining three semesters of the practicum. It was emphasized that meetings would provide opportunities to collectively determine strategies for improving attendance and attitude of project students and would permit the development of specific IEP's for each student in the program, following the format designed by the project manager. (See Appendix pp.154-5.)

Committee members were directed to maintain a system for monitoring the progress of each target student, including periodic evaluation of the progress of each student. It was strongly suggested that they develop and maintain a:

- system of needs analysis for each student --
- referral system of diagnosis and prescription in relationship to the student's IEP --
- system of organizing background information on pupils which facilitated ongoing evaluation of the pupil's status --
- detailed method of coordinating all information on a student and of prescribing changes necessary to improve the student's education --
- log for all student and/or family contacts, documenting the date, the time of contact, and pertinent anecdotal comments --

Additional orientation sessions were conducted during February and September of 1986. The purpose of each session was to reemphasize the importance of committee members maintaining close contact with both students and parents.

Records For Elementary School Project Students Are Reviewed

During the third and fourth week of September, 1985, the committee reviewed the records of all project students in grades two through six. The review of student records enabled committee participants to better understand the factors contributing to the student's irregular attendance pattern. Additionally, teachers were requested to provide current information on class attendance and behavior for the students. The record review assisted committee members in developing a formalized plan of identifying student needs and determining strategies to improve the educational program for each target student.

Liaison Committee Meetings Are Held On A Weekly Basis

At a meeting held on September 24, 1985, members of the Elementary Schools Student Support/Home-School Liaison Committee established a schedule of meetings to be held after regular school hours, one day per week. The elementary school guidance counselor was assigned the responsibility of chairing meetings and preparing an agenda in advance of each meeting. Pages 162 through 164 of the Appendix contain representative agendas.

Committee meetings were held on a regular basis throughout the three semesters of this phase of the practicum. Committee members were actively involved in determining methods to improve the attendance and educational performance of each project student. There were discussions of how to prepare or modi-

fy specific individualized educational plans (IEP's) for students. Additionally, there was a routine sharing of experiences concerning contacts with both the students and the students' families.

The exchange of pertinent information was important in helping committee members recognize common problems and successful rapport-building approaches. For example, during a meeting in October, committee members reported that seven of the target students missed considerable time because of a religious conflict. As members of the Jehovah's Witness group, they were missing school when special holiday and birthday celebrations were held. Committee members, in concert with elementary principals and parents, developed planned alternative activities in the Resource Center for Jehovah's Witness students during times when special celebrations and activities are held.

It was also consensually agreed by committee members that many parents were not aware of the number of times their child missed school. Consequently, arrangements were made to modify the report card so that the number of absences would be emphasized. Additionally, a procedure was developed to send a special school bus to the homes of those students who missed the regular school bus and had no way to get to school. Committee members also reported on the difficult home environment and/or problems for some students and developed great empathy for the

students. Problems included divorce, family confrontations, cramped, dirty, unhealthy living conditions, and child abuse. Committee members reported that their visitations helped them understand why some students exhibited inappropriate or hostile behavior.

Individualized Education Plans Are Prepared For Elementary School Students

During October and November of 1985, the committee prepared specific individualized educational plans (IEP's) for each student in the program, following the standard format found on pages 154 and 155 of the Appendix. This approach was utilized because the writer believed that one of the most beneficial educational innovations introduced in recent years was the individual education plan for students with handicapping conditions. Those familiar with the mandate and requirements of the law know that a prescribed work-up must be completed for each student suspected of having a handicapping condition. Psychological and diagnostic examinations must be administered, health records are screened, and teacher recommendations must be obtained so that the committee on the handicapped may judge whether or not a student is handicapped.

If the committee deems that a student is handicapped, and the Board of Education agrees, then an appropriate educational placement is determined for the student. A detailed individual education plan must be prepared for the student and the parent

must have an opportunity for input in the development of the plan. The IEP is a written, prescribed program designed to provide the handicapped student with the best possible educational placement.

The writer believed that a modified approach to the individual education plan would have a positive impact upon elementary students who had developed a pattern of chronic absenteeism. A total work-up was not required for all target students, but there was an individual assessment for each participant. The committee and/or the elementary counselor was responsible for receiving recommendations from classroom teachers, support services staff, and administrative personnel in the school. All of these recommendations were weighed along with other information available on the student, and then a specific long-range and short-range individual program was designed for the student. The IEP served as an important guide for helping committee members monitor the progress of each target student in comparison to stated goals and objectives. IEP's were systematically revised during the intervention period whenever considered necessary to improve the educational program of the student.

In February of 1986, the writer found it necessary to conduct training sessions to help members of the committee gain an improved understanding of how to properly prepare an individual assessment of each student and then design a written individual

education plan for the student. In retrospect, the writer recognized that more effort should have been devoted to training committee members to prepare IEP's because some members experienced difficulty in relating to this aspect of the practicum design.

The Elementary School Faculty Members Learn About The Project

During the second week of October, 1985, a general meeting of each elementary school faculty was held for the purpose of reviewing the project and obtaining faculty support. By the end of October, 1985, most faculty members cooperated fully with the members of the committee. Teachers routinely provided written information on students concerning class attendance, behavior and academic performance. The continuous exchange of relevant information concerning target students reinforced faculty appreciation for the goals and objectives of the practicum.

Elementary School Students Cooperate With Committee Members

Committee members reported some difficulty in helping students understand why they were being asked to participate in a special project. However, by the end of October, 1985, most elementary school target students appeared to appreciate the attention given them by committee members. A high level of student-committee member rapport was evident during the elementary school intervention phase of the project.

Parents Of Elementary School Students Are Pleased With The Project

It was generally reported that there was some parent concern during the initial contact by the committee member, but after hearing an explanation of the goals and objectives of the practicum, the majority of parents were supportive and cooperative. Committee members were generally well-received throughout the project and reported that most parents were pleased with the attention and time devoted to their child.

However, one parent absolutely refused to cooperate based on his belief that "if I keep my child out of school, its my business." Another was nearly as uncooperative but agreed to participate when the committee member offered to bring the student's homework directly to the home on those days the student was absent. As the project progressed, many parents were complimenting the liaison committee members and the school district for the unusual interest in their children. The general statement made by parents was "its the first time anyone from the school has shown a real concern about my child." The positive public relations aspect of the practicum was not anticipated by the writer.

The Project Manager Meets With Representative Target Students

During special interviews conducted by the writer during the final year of the project, some students initially insisted that their absences during the 1983-84 and 1984-85 school years

were due to illness, trips with parents, or some other "legitimate" reason. However, most students eventually agreed that they could have attended school on many of the days missed during the past two school years. They indicated that special concern shown by their mentors encouraged them to improve their attendance. During conversations with students, it became evident that home visitations were responsible for many parents insisting that students attend school on a more regular basis.

Significant Practicum Activities And Highlights

The Writer Addresses The Region 3 Conference Of Public School And College Guidance Counselors

In February, 1985, the writer was invited to discuss the practicum at a meeting of public school and college guidance counselors scheduled for May 10, 1985 in Saranac Lake, New York. (See Appendix p.192.) The writer, accompanied by four committee members, presented a program on May 10, 1985. (See Appendix pp. 193-4.) The presentation, which was videotaped, was very well received and generated interest in the possibility of replication by other school districts. Presently, several school districts, including Binghamton City Schools, Binghamton, New York; Ticonderoga Central School, Ticonderoga, New York; Bellows Falls Union High School, Bellows Falls, Vermont; Walt Whitman High School, Huntington Station, New York; and Sayville Central School, Sayville, New York; have, or are considering replicating the project. (See Appendix pp.195-9.)

Some districts have sent representative teams to visit AuSable Valley to observe how the project works and copies of the videotape have been forwarded to school districts requesting same.

The Media Shows An Interest In The Project

In late April, 1985, TV station WCAX in Burlington, Vermont interviewed the writer, one committee member and one project student. The reporter conducting the interview had heard of the project and wanted to learn more about the intervention strategy. The result was a three minute spot during the evening news highlighting the success of the practicum. The newscasters applauded the district for taking positive action to encourage students to attend school on a regular basis and to improve academic achievement. As a result of the news program, a number of school districts indicated an interest in learning more about the intervention strategy.

The State Education Department Commends The District For An Excellent Program

On May 6, 1985, a supervisor for the New York State Education Department Bureau of Pupil Services visited AuSable Valley Central School to review the program. In addition to meeting individually with the writer to discuss the positive results of the intervention strategy, he attended a regular meeting of the Junior-Senior High School Student Support/Home-School Liaison Committee. Upon the conclusion of his inspection visitation, the supervisor informed committee members that

he was very impressed by their obvious professional concern for dissaffected students and he commended them for their sincere, conscientious efforts.

On May 22, 1985, the supervisor forwarded a letter of commendation for the "excellent use of resources allocated to the project." Specifically, in regard to committee members, he stated "they have obviously invested a great amount of themselves in this program and in the children and their families." (See Appendix p.200.) The letter was appreciated by the members of the committee and encouraged them to continue their work with renewed enthusiasm and effort.

Staff Development Activities - Group I And Group II

While preparing the project design, the writer concluded that well-conceived and implemented staff development programs would be essential if the project was to succeed. It was recognized that teachers must have opportunities to receive training in effective strategies for dealing with alienated students, or students identified as possessing characteristics generally associated with academic failure and/or excessive absenteeism. The following discusses several of the staff development activities conducted in order to help committee members and/or total staff learn about: (1) various ways to modify curriculum; (2) discipline techniques; (3) classroom management procedures; (4) group dynamics; (5) behavior modification; and (6) counseling techniques.

Representatives Of The Champlain Valley Family Center Meet With The Junior-Senior High School Committee

On March 26, 1985, a staff counselor for the Champlain Valley Family Center met with the Junior-Senior High School Student Support/Home-School Liaison Committee to discuss services available through that agency. The counselor discussed counseling services available for students experiencing drug and alcohol problems, either themselves or with parents. A general discussion ensued concerning problems of specific students and arrangements were made to have in-school services provided for students attending AuSable Valley Central School. Committee members were impressed with the caliber of leadership exhibited by the counselor and learned a great deal about adjunct services provided by community agencies. The actual services provided by the counselor included weekly office hours in the school. Students desiring to speak to the counselor about drug or alcohol problems were permitted to do so in a discreet, confidential setting.

On May 7, 1985, the Director of the Champlain Valley Family Center conducted a workshop for all faculty members. Essentially, the Director explained that the center provides individual and family counseling and therapy for individuals with adjustment and/or drug problems. He described six distinct services available: (1) family counseling; (2) individual counseling; (3) group counseling; (4) drug usage evaluation;

(5) drug education programs; and (6) rehabilitation activities. In addition to learning about the services available at the Champlain Valley Family Center, faculty members had the opportunity to learn more about counseling techniques. (See Appendix pp.201-2.)

The Director Of Counselor Education At The State University College At Plattsburgh Meets With The Committee

During the last week in April, 1985, the Director of the Counselor Education Program at the State University of New York College at Plattsburgh, New York attended a meeting of the Junior-Senior High School Student Support/Home-School Liaison Committee. Questions concerning problems presented by specific students stimulated a vigorous discussion of how to effectively deal with the problems. The Director reviewed a number of strategy approaches which could be considered when dealing with students exhibiting specific adjustment problems. Committee members acquired considerable insight concerning behavior modification and counseling techniques, and felt better prepared to cope with the problems posed by their more challenging students.

A Faculty Workshop On How To Deal With Difficult Discipline Problems

During the last week of January, 1985, five members of the Junior-Senior High School Student Support/Home-School Liaison Committee attended a communication system workshop conducted by a nationally renowned specialist from California State Univer-

sity, Long Beach, California. The workshop was conducted at the State University College at Plattsburgh, New York. The general theme of the skill training workshop was an explanation of a communications system process that uses the combined strengths and influence of teachers, school personnel and parents in resolving behavioral problems of students. Committee members were pleased with the results of the workshop and encouraged the writer to arrange a similar workshop for the entire faculty.

Heeding the request, the writer made arrangements for the specialist to present a faculty workshop on November 8, 1985. The workshop, entitled "How To Deal With Difficult Discipline Problems," focused on developing communication skills, interaction patterns and backup techniques for the purpose of enhancing the student's academic, behavioral, and social development. Each faculty member received a workbook containing exercises designed to facilitate an understanding of the intervention plan suggested by the workshop consultant. (See Appendix pp. 203-4.)

Faculty members were especially interested in the part of the program dealing with unclear teacher or parent communications. They learned that many teachers attempt to change inappropriate student behavior by making unclear or ambiguous statements. For example, the often used teacher statement "Do that again. I dare you!," really implies that the teacher

would like the student to continue the behavior so he can show the student what will happen. The opportunity to analyze various communication patterns helped the faculty identify less ambiguous ways to try to change inappropriate student behavior.

Committee Members Attend A Training Workshop Entitled "Counseling Children At Risk"

On Friday, September 27, 1985, five members of the Student Support/Home-School Liaison Committees joined the writer in attending a special training workshop dealing with children at risk. The full-day workshop, sponsored by the Clinton County Mental Health Association, was conducted at the Holiday Inn in Plattsburgh, New York. The featured speaker was the Coordinator for Children's Services at Howard Mental Services in Burlington, Vermont. (See Appendix p.205.)

The stimulating workshop session offered a review of child developmental issues and common problem areas such as learning disabilities, development delay, and problems confronting children from families with alcoholic or mentally ill parents. There was also focus on communication skills in working with children, especially those from homes where parents exhibit hostile attitudes toward school personnel. Many suggestions were made concerning how to more effectively cope with an adversarial teacher-parent relationship which often develops when parents feel personally affronted if their child experiences a problem in school. As a result of the workshop, those in at-

tendance felt better prepared to help students experiencing various adjustment problems. Committee members consensually agreed that it was extremely important to learn more about behavior modification and counseling techniques.

Relationship Enhancement Skill Training Workshops

As the project evolved, the writer recognized that members of the Student Support/Home-School Liaison Committees needed opportunities to learn how to more effectively foster a closer working relationship between parents and school personnel. When several efforts to obtain skilled technical assistance to conduct relationship enhancement skill training workshops failed, the project manager decided to personally plan and direct staff development training sessions. (See Appendix, pp.206-8.) The primary purpose of the workshops was to encourage partnership between the home and school in order to enhance the educational support capabilities of the family. (See Appendix, p.209.)

In preparing for the training program, the writer relied upon several sources including "The Home-School Connection: Selected Partnership Programs in Large Cities," (1982) and "Toward Better and Safer Schools." (1984) During March and April, 1986, workshops were held with focus upon recognition that:

1. many parents want to work closely with schools in the education of their children even though some have difficulty in

knowing how to establish and maintain a working relationship with school personnel...

2. in order to achieve and maintain student educational gains, it is usually necessary to have parent involvement and support...

3. many parents feel uncomfortable in school for a number of reasons, one often being that the parents had unpleasant and/or unsuccessful school experiences...

4. programs which make personal contact with parents by individual conferences and/or frequent contacts outside the school setting, can better accomodate concerns of parents and create more involvement...

5. widespread support of educational programs by teachers, administrators, parents and other segments of the community will enhance improved home-school relations...

6. at the secondary level, parents often have difficulty in establishing a single comprehensive link with the school because their children have a number of teachers...

7. care must be taken to insure that target students and parents of target students are not stigmatized as a result of program participation...

8. parents must be convinced that school officials feel it important that parents become co-partners in the collaborative effort to improve student attendance, grades and attitude...

9. parents should realize that they are free to contact committee members whenever the need arises...

10. parents should be given help in learning how to conduct activities to help children in the home...

11. parents require help in implementing strategies designed to enforce a quiet time for homework, and help in understanding how to check homework for completeness.

12. faculty members should learn to be sensitive to the feelings of parents and make them feel welcome in the school...

The four staff development programs were designed to encourage active participation and involvement by each member of the Student Support/Home-School Liaison Committees. The four sessions resulted in broad committee participation and a stimulating professional exchange of opinions, experiences and observations. The writer was pleased that committee members recognized the importance of employing various techniques to encourage active parent support and involvement. Committee consensus was that during the first home visitation by the teacher, it is important for the teacher to convince parents that he/she has a sincere interest in both the student and parent. Initial statements used by committee members included "I'm here because I like your child and I want him/her to succeed," or "I know that you are as interested in helping your son/daughter to succeed as I am." Committee members emphasized that by focusing on the positive, parents would usually enter into meaning-

ful dialogue because their suspicions diminished.

Several committee members cited the significance of allowing parents to fully express their feelings about the school and school personnel even if critical or negative comments were made. They recognized that being a "good listener" is often more important than giving professional advice and can do much to help develop a trusting parent-teacher relationship.

Faculty Workshops Designed To Improve The School Learning Climate

As the practicum progressed, the writer concluded that all faculty members should have an opportunity to become familiar with current literature relative to the important relationship between school climate and learning as reported by Brookover, (1982) Madaus, (1980) and others. The decision was made to focus on the premise, as reported by Brookover, (1982) "that some schools with educationally disadvantaged students do produce high achievement" and that "it is possible for other schools to achieve that goal." It was determined that faculty members should be made aware of the characteristics of schools with effective learning climates, including the belief, as stated by Brookover, (1982) "that all students can and will achieve at high levels." The writer believed that exposure to effective schools research would result in some teachers becoming more sensitive to the individual needs of students by showing increased understanding and patience when dealing with them.

Arrangements were made for a curriculum and instructional specialist to conduct two workshops centering on "How effective is AuSable Valley Central School?" and "What kinds of people-related efforts characterize effective schools across the nation?" (See Appendix, p.210.) The workshop coordinator was selected because he had conducted in excess of 200 workshops geared toward improving instructional practices, and was extremely well qualified for the task of helping faculty learn how to improve the school learning climate. Workshops for the entire faculty were conducted on May 6, and September 2, 1986.

During the first workshop, the coordinator asked each faculty member to complete an assessment form designed to measure teacher perception of significant school climate factors. (See Appendix pp.211-13.) The results of the assessment were collated to determine teacher attitude about: respect; trust; morale; opportunity for input; opportunity for academic and social growth; cohesiveness; school renewal; and caring. Results were categorized on a continuum scale ranging from "almost never" to "almost always." In each of the three school buildings in the district, teachers indicated general satisfaction with all climate factors except opportunity for input and opportunity for academic and social growth. (See Appendix, pp.214-16.)

Using the results of the assessment as a focal point, the coordinator identifyed and discussed specific ways that people

- teachers, students, administrators, parents and others - make the difference between schools that work and schools that do not. During the May session, it was emphasized that the following characteristics (Hersh, 1982) are found in effective schools: (1) educators set clear academic and social goals; (2) curriculum is closely linked to school-wide goals; (3) teachers check student progress frequently; (4) everyone in the school understands and accepts basic rules of conduct; (5) students take responsibility for their own learning behavior; (6) teachers hold high expectations for students and themselves; (7) teachers promote high academic learning time; (8) teachers and principals care; (9) principals are strong leaders; and (10) parents and community members participate in, and support school events. (See Appendix, pp.217-18.)

The workshop coordinator continuously stressed that the quality of teaching at AuSable Valley was very good but that there was room to significantly improve the learning climate. In discussing specific ways to improve instruction and learning, he concentrated on the major findings of effective schools studies. It was emphasized that there is no single factor that accounts for a school being classified as exceptional but that effective schools appear to have a "critical mass of positive factors which, when put together, make the difference." (See Appendix, p.219.)

Germane to teacher behavior, the coordinator spoke about

the significance of the teacher having high expectations for students while treating them in a warm, compassionate, responsive manner. He reminded teachers that teacher expectations help determine the learning environment in the school and cautioned them to avoid the formation of negative self-fulfilling prophecies for students. Great emphasis was placed on increasing student motivation by developing stimulating ways to introduce lessons. The coordinator's theme complemented and reinforced the writer's efforts to encourage teachers to develop a warm, caring relationship with each student while expecting quality work from the student.

The workshops were well received by faculty but it was evident to the writer that a comprehensive treatment of effective schools research would take a minimum of one week of continuous staff development activities. Nevertheless, the programs stimulated interest in a two-week college workshop on effective teaching strategies based upon the Madeline Hunter model. Seven faculty members attended the workshop held at the State University College at Plattsburgh during the summer of 1986. Several other teachers indicated interest in a similar program during the summer of 1987.

During the September 2nd workshop, there was an attempt to familiarize teachers with instructional methods and related teacher behaviors which classroom studies have shown to be the most effective for increasing student achievement. Specifical-

ly, emphasis was placed on the importance of a combination of viable instructional techniques including Learning for Mastery, and Direct Instruction as reported by Brookover. (1982) The coordinator encouraged teachers to recognize that in using any instructional strategy, it is important to maintain high standards for student learning and to expect all students to learn. The majority of faculty members were impressed by the enthusiasm of the coordinator and agreed that they would implement suggested strategy for enhancing the school learning climate.

Following the workshop, the coordinator met several times with principals to discuss the development of a comprehensive school improvement plan for each school building. The thrust of the planning process centered on the cooperative involvement of teachers, administrators, parents, students and others in consensually determing philosophy, goals and objectives, school discipline policy, the school organization, and related educational concerns. In the process of working toward the goal of insuring an effective, well-run building, the coordinator pointed out that teachers would be provided opportunity for meaningful input and involvement. The administrative staff agreed to work toward the development of a comprehensive school improvement plan during the second semester of 1986-87.

<u>The Courts And Social Agencies Compliment The School District For Conducting The Project</u>

During the second year of the practicum, representatives

of the Essex County and Clinton County Probation Departments visited AuSable Valley Central School several times to learn about the intervention strategy and to commend the school for a program that "successfully diverts youth from family court proceedings." (See Appendix p.220.) Specifically, the Essex County Probation Department Director stated that "through early intervention and much personal time and attention, school professionals have "turned around" all but the toughest cases of absenteeism and misbehavior." (See Appendix p.221.) The Essex County Family Court Judge urged that the program be continued and encouraged other school districts to "follow suit with similar worthwhile projects." (See Appendix p.220.)

The Writer Speaks To Community Organizations

During the two-year practicum intervention period, the writer addressed a number of groups and organizations to explain the project. As an example, on March 11, 1986, he discussed the practicum at a meeting of the Keeseville Kiwanis Club. (See Appendix, p.222.) It was reported that the two-year project was designed to improve student attendance, academic achievement and attitude. The writer emphasized that the project design called for a humanistic, caring school environment and high involvement by the members of the Student Support/Home-School Liaison Committees.

A detailed evaluation of the program was presented to those in attendance, including a comparison of target student

attendance and achievement for the first year of the project with the same time period for the 1983-84 base year. The members of the Kiwanis Club were impressed by the significant gains shown by many target students and expressed strong support for school district officials to provide the level of funding necessary to continue the intervention strategy.

The "New York Teacher" Applauds The Project

The "New York Teacher" magazine, a publication of the New York State United Teachers, featured an article on the project in the November 25, 1985 issue. (See Appendix pp.223-24.) Interest in the project stemmed from the fact that the teacher organization had vigorously sought State legislation to fund programs designed to encourage "children at risk" to remain in school. The magazine, circulated to approximately 250,000 teachers, focused on how an innovative program succeeded in dramatically reducing absenteeism and improving student grades. As a result of the article, a number of districts requested information on the project.

The Commissioner Of Education And Key State Education Department Officials Visit AuSable Valley Central School

On October 9, 1986, the New York State Commissioner of Education and several key State Education Department officials visited the district to meet with members of the Attendance Improvement/Home-School Liaison Committees. The culmination of the visit was a two hour round table discussion of the program.

The news release announcing the Commissioner's visit referred to site visitation of schools offering exemplary programs. Representatives of several newspapers attended the round table discussion. (See Appendix pp.225-27.)

The Commissioner and the Deputy Commissioner for Elementary, Secondary and Continuing Education were greatly impressed by what they observed at AuSable Valley Central School. (See Appendix p.232.) The Deputy Commissioner was quoted as saying "AuSable Valley Junior-Senior High School is the best school I've had the privilege to visit during my years as Deputy Commissioner. The students and the staff are doing what we want every school in the State to do." (See Appendix, pp.225-33.)

A Member Of The Committee Participates In A Statewide Teleconference

At the request of the Commissioner of Education, the writer selected a member of the Junior-Senior High School Student Support/Home-School Liaison Committee to participate in a statewide teleconference dealing with the issue of encouraging students to complete high school. In a letter of appreciation sent to the committee member, the Deputy Commissioner stated "Your involvement helped to show that all schools, not just urban minority schools, should be concerned about their at-risk youth." He concluded by thanking the committee member for presenting " AuSable Valley's very effective program for increasing high school completions." (See Appendix, pp.234-35.)

CHAPTER 6

MEASURING OUTCOMES: STUDENT ATTENDANCE AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

A Strategy For Improving Attendance And Academic Achievement

The practicum was designed to improve both attendance and academic achievement for selected students in grades one through ten, at the time of initial intervention, attending AuSable Valley Central School. The evaluative data contained on the following pages indicate that a significant number of project students did improve attendance and academic achievement as planned. Evaluation included a comparison of student attendance records and academic performance during the intervention phase of the project with comparable information for the base year.

Attendance Improves For Junior-Senior High School Target Students During The First Year Of The Project

The following four tables compare the junior-senior high school attendance profile by grade level for the second semester of 1984-85 and the first semester of 1985-86 with corresponding information for the 1983-84 school year. The comparison reveals improved attendance for 47 of the target students. A desired terminal objective for intervention strategies implemented during the period February 1, 1985 to January 31, 1986, was to decrease the number of full days of absence by 12 1/2 percent as compared to the same period of time during the 1983-84 school year. The actual number of full days of absence dur-

ing the first year of intervention for students remaining in the project was 1142 as compared to 1631 for 1983-84, indicating that the terminal objective was achieved as projected.

Another projected outcome of intervention activities was for 80 percent of the students to show a decline of 30 percent or more in their rate of absenteeism for the period February 1, 1985 to January 31, 1986, in comparison to similar records for the base year. Analysis of the data in tables 12 through 15 reveals that 31 of the 59 students remaining in the project showed a decline of 30 percent or more in their rate of absenteeism which means that 52.5 percent of the target group met the requirement of the objective. Although the terminal objective was not achieved, substantial progress toward the objective was made.

Table 12

Clintonville Junior-Senior High School First Year Comparative Attendance Profile for Students in Grade 8

Grade Level 1985-86	Student Number	Days of Absence First Year of Project*	1983-84	Improved Record	Decline of 30% or More
8	70	11	20	+	+
8	71	**	**	**	**
7	72	21	41	+	+
8	73	27	45	+	+
8	74	**	**	**	**
8	75	35	28		
8	76	11	48	+	+
8	77	**	**	**	**
8	78	23	20		
8	79	**	**	**	**
8	80	19	39	+	+
8	81	17	21	+	
8	82	**	**	**	**
7	83	17	21	+	
Total		181	283	7	5

*Second semester of 1984-85 and the first semester of 1985-86.
**Transferred.

Table 13

Clintonville Junior-Senior High School First Year

Comparative Attendance Profile for

Students in Grade 9

Grade Level 1985-86	Student Number	Days of Absence First Year of Project*	1983-84	Improved Record	Decline of 30% or More
9	84	2	20	+	+
9	85	12	22	+	+
9	86	12	24	+	+
9	87	18	36	+	+
9	88	15	20	+	
9	89	4	21	+	+
9	90	***	***	***	***
9	91	18	27	+	+
9	92	***	***	***	***
9	93	16	23	+	+
9	94	**	**	**	**
9	95	27	41	+	+
8	96	33	25		
9	97	**	**	**	**
9	98	20	23	+	
9	99	35	22		
9	100	**	**	**	**
9	101	**	**	**	**
9	102	10	23	+	+
9	103	21	25	+	
9	104	23	41	+	+
9	105	**	**	**	**
9	106	28	20		
Total		294	413	13	10

*Second semester of 1984-85 and the first semester of 1985-86.
**Transferred.
***Dropped out.

Table 14

Clintonville Junior-Senior High School First Year

Comparative Attendance Profile for

Students in Grade 10

Grade Level 1985-86	Student Number	Days of Absence First Year of Project*	1983-84	Improved Record	Decline of 30% or More
10	107	23	31	+	
10	108	14	23	+	+
10	109	18	29	+	+
10	110	32	34	+	
10	111	15	22	+	+
10	112	**	**	**	**
10	113	12	37	+	+
10	114	18	27	+	+
10	115	31	26		
10	116	25	22		
9	117	21	20		
10	118	13	25	+	+
10	119	**	**	**	**
11	120	20	25	+	
10	121	19	33	+	+
11	122	7	22	+	+
10	123	**	**	**	**
9	124	24	26	+	
11	125	37	26		
11	126	16	20	+	
10	127	***	***	***	
Total		345	448	13	8

*Second semester of 1984-85 and the first semester of 1985-86.
**Transferred.
***Dropped out.

Table 15

Clintonville Junior-Senior High School First Year

Comparative Attendance Profile for

Students in Grade 11

Grade Level 1985-86	Student Number	Days of Absence First Year of Project*	1983-84	Improved Record	Decline of 30% or More
11	128	20	24	+	
11	129	9	42	+	+
10	130	***	***	***	***
11	131	10	27	+	+
11	132	11	26	+	+
11	133	23	24	+	
11	134	21	28	+	
11	135	28	30	+	
11	136	16	20	+	
11	137	24	32	+	
11	138	3	23	+	+
11	139	12	30	+	+
11	140	**	**	**	**
11	141	**	**	**	**
10	142	19	62	+	+
11	143	46	23		
11	144	15	25	+	+
10	145	27	22		
11	146	11	29	+	+
11	147	27	20		
Total		322	487	14	8

*Second semester of 1984-85 and the first semester of 1985-86.
**Transferred.
***Dropped out.

Attendance Improves For Junior-Senior High School Target Students During The Second Year Of The Project

Tables 16 through 19 compare the high school attendance profile by grade level for the second semester of 1985-86 and first semester of 1986-87 with corresponding information for the 1983-84 school year. The comparison shows improved attendance for 37 of the target students. The writer believed that intervention strategies implemented during the period February 1, 1986 to January 31, 1987, would result in a decrease in the number of full days of absence by 25 percent as compared to the same period of time during the 1983-84 school year. The actual number of full days of absence during the period for students remaining in the project was 862 as compared to 1288 for 1983-84, indicating that the terminal objective was achieved as projected.

Another expected outcome of intervention activities was for 80 percent of the project students to show a decline of 40 percent or more in their rate of absenteeism for the period February 1, 1986 to January 31, 1987, in comparison to similar records for the base year. Analysis of the data in tables 16 through 19 reveals that 25 of the 47 students remaining in the program showed a decline of 40 percent or more in their rate of absenteeism which means that 53.2 percent of the target group met the requirements of the objective. Although the objective was not achieved, it was gratifying to note that a significant

number of students did show a decline of 40 percent or more in their rate of absenteeism.

The writer did not anticipate that so many target students would move to other school districts during the two-year intervention period. The turnover rate for project students was higher than for the general student population.

Table 16

Clintonville Junior-Senior High School Second Year Comparative Attendance Profile for Students in Grade 9

Grade Level 1986-87	Student Number	Days of Absence Second Year of Project*	1983-84	Improved Record	Decline of 40% or More
9	70	6	20	+	+
9	71	**	**	**	**
8	72	19	41	+	+
8	73	41	45	+	
9	74	**	**	**	**
9	75	**	**	**	**
9	76	6	48	+	+
9	77	**	**	**	**
9	78	20	20		
9	79	**	**	**	**
9	80	38	39	+	
9	81	6	21	+	+
9	82	**	**	**	**
8	83	25	21		
Total		161	255	6	4

*Second semester of 1985-86 and the first semester of 1986-87.
**Transferred.

Table 17

Clintonville Junior-Senior High School Second Year Comparative Attendance Profile for Students in Grade 10

Grade Level 1986-87	Student Number	Days of Absence Second Year of Project*	1983-84	Improved Record	Decline of 40% or More
10	84	6	20	+	+
10	85	24	22		
10	86	23	24	+	
9	87	16	36	+	+
10	88	9	20	+	+
10	89	15	21	+	
9	90	***	***	***	***
9	91	19	27	+	
9	92	***	***	***	***
10	93	26	23		
10	94	**	**	**	**
10	95	**	**	**	**
9	96	**	**	**	**
10	97	**	**	**	**
10	98	13	23	+	+
10	99	***	***	***	***
10	100	**	**	**	**
10	101	**	**	**	**
10	102	19	23	+	
10	103	38	25		
9	104	**	**	**	**
10	105	**	**	**	**
10	106	13	20	+	
Total		221	284	9	4

*Second semester of 1985-86 and the first semester of 1986-87.
**Transferred.
***Dropped out.

Table 18

Clintonville Junior-Senior High School Second Year Comparative Attendance Profile for Students in Grade 11

Grade Level 1986-87	Student Number	Days of Absence Second Year of Project*	1983-84	Improved Record	Decline of 40% or More
11	107	28	31	+	
11	108	2	23	+	+
11	109	9	29	+	+
10	110	64	34		
11	111	12	22	+	+
11	112	**	**	**	**
11	113	10	37	+	+
11	114	14	27	+	+
11	115	25	26	+	
11	116	26	22		
10	117	25	20		
11	118	9	25	+	+
11	119	**	**	**	**
12	120	24	25	+	
11	121	14	33	+	+
12	122	23	22		
11	123	**	**	**	**
10	124	**	**	**	**
12	125	11	26	+	+
12	126	16	20	+	
10	127	***	***	***	***
Total		312	422	12	8

*Second semester of 1985-86 and the first semester of 1986-87.
**Transferred.
***Dropped out.

Table 19

Clintonville Junior-Senior High School Second Year Comparative Attendance Profile for Students in Grade 12

Grade Level 1986-87	Student Number	Days of Absence Second Year of Project*	1983-84	Improved Record	Decline of 40% or More
12	128	12	24	+	+
12	129	0	42	+	+
11	130	***	***	***	***
12	131	7	27	+	+
12	132	15	26	+	+
G	133	G	G	G	G
12	134	16	28	+	+
11	135	46	30		
12	136	19	20	+	
12	137	**	**	**	**
12	138	9	23	+	+
G	139	G	G	G	G
12	140	**	**	**	**
12	141	**	**	**	**
11	142	30	62	+	+
12	143	**	**	**	**
12	144	5	25	+	+
11	145	***	***	***	***
G	146	G	G	G	G
12	147	9	20	+	+
Total		168	327	10	9

*Second semester of 1985-86 and the first semester of 1986-87.
**Transferred. ***Dropped out.
G - Graduated 06/86.

The Majority Of Junior-Senior High School Project Students Improve Their Grades During The First Year Of The Project

A desired project outcome was for 40 percent of the target population to improve individual grades by two or more percent-

age points for the first year of the practicum in comparison to the 1983-84 school year. Tables 20 through 23 compare the grade point averages of project students for the first year of intervention with their grade averages for the base year. Inspection of the tables reveals that 44 students improved their grades during the period of intervention with 42 of the 59 students remaining in the program improving their grades by two or more percentage points. Inasmuch as 71.2 percent of the target population improved grades by a minimum of two percent, the terminal objective was achieved.

Table 20

Clintonville Junior-Senior High School First Year

Comparative Grade Point Averages for Grade 8

Grade Level 1985-86	Student Number	Grade Avg. 1st Year of Project*	Grade Average 1983-84	Improved Record	Improved Record 2% or More
8	70	66.00	87.00		
8	71	**	**	**	**
7	72	63.00	53.00	+	+
8	73	72.50	57.50	+	+
8	74	**	**	**	**
8	75	47.50	58.00		
8	76	78.50	65.00	+	+
8	77	**	**	**	**
8	78	85.00	92.50		
8	79	**	**	**	**
8	80	74.50	62.50	+	+
8	81	73.50	78.50		
8	82	**	**	**	**
7	83	58.50	72.50		
Total				4	4

*Second semester of 1984-85 and the first semester of 1985-86.
**Transferred.

Table 21

Clintonville Junior-Senior High School First Year

Comparative Grade Point Averages for Grade 9

Grade Level 1985-86	Student Number	Grade Avg. 1st Year of Project*	Grade Average 1983-84	Improved Record	Improved Record 2% or More
9	84	88.00	85.50	+	+
9	85	78.50	72.00	+	+
9	86	74.00	67.50	+	+
9	87	57.50	60.00		
9	88	84.50	80.00	+	+
9	89	75.00	66.00	+	+
9	90	***	***	***	***
9	91	67.50	48.00	+	+
9	92	***	***	***	***
9	93	62.50	68.50		
9	94	**	**	**	**
9	95	64.00	63.00	+	
8	96	47.50	82.50		
9	97	**	**	**	**
9	98	71.00	71.50		
9	99	64.50	68.50		
9	100	**	**	**	**
9	101	**	**	**	**
9	102	77.50	65.00	+	+
9	103	69.50	59.50	+	+
9	104	60.50	55.00	+	+
9	105	**	**	**	**
9	106	67.50	60.00	+	+
Total				11	10

*Second semester of 1984-85 and the first semester of 1985-86.
**Transferred.
***Dropped out.

Table 22

Clintonville Junior-Senior High School First Year

Comparative Grade Point Averages for Grade 10

Grade Level 1985-86	Student Number	Grade Avg. 1st Year of Project*	Grade Average 1983-84	Improved Record	Improved Record 2% or More
10	107	78.50	76.50	+	+
10	108	77.00	72.50	+	+
10	109	83.50	65.00	+	+
10	110	67.50	62.00	+	+
10	111	84.00	74.50	+	+
10	112	**	**	**	**
10	113	81.00	83.00		
10	114	71.50	67.50	+	+
10	115	65.50	73.00		
10	116	85.00	71.00	+	+
9	117	76.00	64.00	+	+
10	118	76.00	69.00	+	+
10	119	**	**	**	**
11	120	77.50	64.50	+	+
10	121	75.50	73.50	+	+
11	122	74.00	77.50		
10	123	**	**	**	**
9	124	70.00	69.50	+	
11	125	74.00	67.00	+	+
11	126	80.50	76.00	+	+
10	127	***	***	***	***
Total				14	13

*Second semester of 1984-85 and the first semester of 1985-86.
**Transferred.
***Dropped out.

Table 23

Clintonville Junior-Senior High School First Year

Comparative Grade Point Averages for Grade 11

Grade Level 1985-86	Student Number	Grade Avg. 1st year of Project*	Grade Average 1983-84	Improved Record	Improved Record 2% or More
11	128	86.00	81.00	+	+
11	129	88.00	75.00	+	+
10	130	***	***	***	***
11	131	82.00	78.00	+	+
11	132	82.00	78.50	+	+
11	133	76.00	60.00	+	+
11	134	82.50	73.50	+	+
11	135	70.00	71.00		
11	136	80.00	78.00	+	+
11	137	72.50	64.50	+	+
11	138	86.00	80.00	+	+
11	139	80.00	68.00	+	+
11	140	**	**	**	**
11	141	**	**	**	**
10	142	72.00	63.00	+	+
11	143	62.00	71.00		
11	144	75.00	72.00	+	+
10	145	59.00	53.00	+	+
11	146	80.50	65.00	+	+
11	147	72.00	70.00	+	+
Total				15	15

*Second semester of 1984-85 and the first semester of 1985-86.
**Transferred.
***Dropped out.

The Majority Of Junior-Senior High School Target Students Improve Their Grades During The Second Year Of The Project

As a result of practicum activities, the writer anticipated that 50 percent of the target population would improve individual grades by three or more percentage points for the second year

of the project in comparison to the 1983-84 school year. Tables 24 through 27 compare the grade point averages of project students for the period of intervention with grade point averages for the base year. The tables show that 35 students improved their grades during the second year of the project with 31 of the 47 students remaining in the program improving their grades by three or more percentage points. Inasmuch as 66 percent of the target population improved grades by a minimum of three percent, the terminal objective was achieved.

Table 24

Clintonville Junior-Senior High School Second Year

Comparative Grade Point Averages for Grade 9

Grade Level 1986-87	Student Number	Grade Avg. 2nd Year of Project*	Grade Average 1983-84	Improved Record	Improved Record 3% or More
9	70	75.50	87.00		
9	71	**	**	**	**
8	72	66.50	53.00	+	+
8	73	74.50	57.50	+	+
9	74	**	**	**	**
9	75	**	**	**	**
9	76	75.50	65.00	+	+
9	77	**	**	**	**
9	78	85.00	92.50		
9	79	**	**	**	**
9	80	61.00	62.50		
9	81	77.50	78.50		
9	82	**	**	**	**
8	83	62.50	72.50		
Total				3	3

*Second semester of 1985-86 and the first semester of 1986-87.
**Transferred.

Table 25

Clintonville Junior-Senior High School Second Year

Comparative Grade Point Averages for Grade 10

Grade Level 1986-87	Student Number	Grade Avg. 2nd Year of Project*	Grade Average 1983-84	Improved Record	Improved Record 3% or More
10	84	86.50	85.50	+	
10	85	70.00	72.00		
10	86	73.50	67.50	+	+
9	87	60.50	60.00	+	
10	88	86.00	80.00	+	+
10	89	75.50	66.00	+	+
9	90	***	***	***	***
9	91	55.50	48.00	+	+
9	92	***	***	***	***
10	93	60.50	68.50		
10	94	**	**	**	**
10	95	**	**	**	**
9	96	**	**	**	**
10	97	**	**	**	**
10	98	60.50	71.50		
10	99	***	***	***	***
10	100	**	**	**	**
10	101	**	**	**	**
10	102	81.00	65.00	+	+
10	103	66.50	59.50	+	+
9	104	**	**	**	**
10	105	**	**	**	**
10	106	67.50	60.00	+	+
Total				9	7

*Second semester of 1985-86 and the first semester of 1986-87.
**Transferred.
***Dropped out.

Table 26

Clintonville Junior-Senior High School Second Year

Comparative Grade Point Averages for Grade 11

Grade Level 1986-87	Student Number	Grade Avg. 2nd Year of Project*	Grade Average 1983-84	Improved Record	Improved Record 3% or More
11	107	72.50	76.50		
11	108	75.50	72.50	+	+
11	109	90.50	65.00	+	+
10	110	61.00	62.00		
11	111	83.50	74.50	+	+
11	112	**	**	**	**
11	113	84.50	83.00	+	
11	114	71.00	67.50	+	+
11	115	75.00	73.00	+	
11	116	85.00	71.00	+	+
10	117	80.50	64.00	+	+
11	118	77.50	69.00	+	+
11	119	**	**	**	**
12	120	75.00	64.50	+	+
11	121	80.00	73.50	+	+
12	122	72.00	77.50		
11	123	**	**	**	**
10	124	**	**	**	**
12	125	71.00	67.00	+	+
12	126	84.50	76.00	+	+
10	127	***	***	***	***
Total				13	11

*Second semester of 1985-86 and the first semester of 1986-87.
**Transferred.
***Dropped out.

Table 27

Clintonville Junior-Senior High School Second Year

Comparative Grade Point Averages for Grade 12

Grade Level 1986-87	Student Number	Grade Avg. 2nd Year of Project*	Grade Average 1983-84	Improved Record	Improved Record 3% or More
12	128	88.00	81.00	+	+
12	129	90.50	75.00	+	+
11	130	***	***	***	***
12	131	85.00	78.00	+	+
12	132	84.00	78.50	+	+
G	133	G	G	G	G
12	134	81.50	73.50	+	+
11	135	77.50	71.00	+	+
12	136	77.00	78.00		
12	137	**	**	**	**
12	138	87.00	80.00	+	+
G	139	G	G	G	G
12	140	**	**	**	**
12	141	**	**	**	**
11	142	71.00	63.00	+	+
12	143	**	**	**	**
12	144	79.00	72.00	+	+
11	145	***	***	***	***
G	146	G	G	G	G
12	147	78.50	70.00	+	+
Total				10	10

*Second semester of 1985-86 and the first semester of 1986-87.
**Transferred.
***Dropped out.
G - Graduated 06/86.

Attendance Improves For Elementary School Target Students During The First Semester Of The Project

The following three tables compare the attendance profile by grade level for the first semester of 1985-86 with the same time period for the base year. The comparison reveals improved attendance for 49 target students. When the practicum was planned, the writer hoped that intervention activities implemented during the period September 1, 1985 to January 31, 1986, would result in a decrease in the number of full days of absence by 12.5 percent as compared to the same time period during the 1983-84 school year. The actual number of full days of absence during the period of intervention for the 60 students remaining in the project was 429 as compared to 778 for the base period, indicating that the objective was achieved.

An important projected outcome of intervention activities was for 80 percent of the target students to show a decline of 30 percent or more in their rate of absenteeism for the period September 1, 1985 to January 31, 1986, in comparison to similar records for the base year. The data in tables 28 to 30 indicate that 44 students or 73.3 percent of the target group showed a decline of 30 percent or more in their rate of absenteeism. The objective was not achieved as projected but satisfactory progress was made. It should be noted that table 30 contains attendance information for students in grade seven who were in elementary school at the time the project was implemented.

Table 28

AuSable Forks Elementary School First Semester Comparative Attendance Profile for Target Students

Grade Level 1985-86	Student Number	Days of Absence 1st Sem. 1983-84	1st Sem. 1985-86	Improved Record	Decline of 30% or More
2	1	17	2	+	+
2	2	20	1	+	+
2	3	14	7	+	+
2	4	**	**	**	**
2	5	9	9		
2	6	14	11	+	
2	7	10	4	+	+
3	8	6	5	+	
3	9	36	14	+	+
3	10	13	6	+	+
3	11	11	7	+	+
3	12	29	13	+	+
3	13	12	3	+	+
3	14	11	6	+	+
4	15	8	0	+	+
3	16	11	6	+	+
4	17	20	7	+	+
4	18	13	6	+	+
5	19	11	4	+	+
5	20	10	16		
5	21	**	**	**	**
5	22	13	10	+	
5	23	14	5	+	+
6	24	12	8	+	+
6	25	6	2	+	+
6	26	21	5	+	+
Total		341	157	22	19

**Transferred.

Table 29

Keeseville Elementary School First Semester Comparative Attendance Profile for Target Students

Grade Level 1985-86	Student Number	Days of Absence 1st Sem. 1983-84	1st Sem. 1985-86	Improved Record	Decline of 30% or More
2	30	**	**	**	**
2	31	12	6	+	+
2	32	14	1	+	+
2	33	11	5	+	+
1	34	13	2	+	+
1	35	26	7	+	+
2	36	13	5	+	+
1	37	8	7	+	
2	38	21	8	+	+
2	39	6	4	+	+
2	40	12	10	+	
3	41	**	**	**	**
3	42	**	**	**	**
2	43	18	5	+	+
3	44	15	8	+	+
3	45	20	13	+	+
3	46	6	13		
4	47	10	1	+	+
4	48	9	5	+	+
4	49	28	10	+	+
3	50	11	4	+	+
4	51	5	3	+	+
4	52	8	4	+	+
4	53	10	5	+	+
5	54	14	6	+	+
5	55	15	15		
6	56	13	6	+	+
6	57	12	4	+	+
6	58	12	2	+	+
6	59	**	**	**	**
6	60	15	24		
Total		357	183	24	22

**Transferred.

Table 30

Clintonville Junior-Senior High School First Semester Comparative Attendance Profile for Seventh Grade Target Students+

Grade Level 1985-86	Student Number	Days of Absence 1st Sem. 1983-84	1st Sem. 1985-86	Improved Record	Decline of 30% or More
7	27	19	12	+	+
7	28	**	**	**	**
7	29	5	5		
7	61	**	**	**	**
7	62	6	12		
7	63	7	7		
7	64	**	**	**	**
7	65	9	5	+	+
7	66	4	14		
7	67	10	12		
7	68	4	11		
7	69	16	11	+	+
Total		80	89	3	3

**Transferred.
+Sixth grade students in 1984-85 when the project was prepared.

Attendance Improves For Elementary School Target Students During The Second And Third Semesters Of The Project

Tables 31 through 33 compare the attendance profile by grade level for the second semester of 1985-86 and first semester of 1986-87 with the base year. The tables detail data for students in grades three through eight, students who were in elementary school when the project was initiated. The comparison shows improved attendance for 53 target students. The

writer expected that intervention strategies implemented during the period February 1, 1986 to January 31, 1987, would lead to a decrease in the number of full days of absence by 25 percent as compared to the 1983-84 school year. The actual number of full days of absence during the period of intervention for the 58 students remaining in the project was 767 as compared to 1544 for the base period, indicating that the terminal objective was achieved as projected. Members of the Student Support/Home-School Liaison Committee were extremely pleased that the number of full days of absence for the intervention period was 49.7 percent lower than for the 1983-84 school year.

An anticipated outcome of practicum activities was for 80 percent of the project students to show a decline of 40 percent or more in their rate of absenteeism for the period February 1, 1986 to January 31, 1987, in comparison to similar records for the base year. The data in tables 31 to 33 indicate that 39 students or 67.2 percent of the target group showed a decline of 40 percent or more in their rate of absenteeism. The terminal objective was not achieved as projected but considerable improvement was accomplished.

Table 33 contains information for students in grades seven and eight who were in elementary school at the time the project was implemented. For evaluative purposes, it was necessary to list the students with the project students attending elementary school.

Table 31

AuSable Forks Elementary School Second and Third Semester Comparative Attendance Profile for Target Students

Grade Level 1986-87	Student Number	Days of Absence 2nd Year of Project*	1983-84	Improved Record	Decline of 40% or More
2	1	4	27	+	+
2	2	11	41	+	+
2	3	12	29	+	+
3	4	**	**	**	**
2	5	12	23	+	+
2	6	15	24	+	
3	7	8	17	+	+
4	8	18	24	+	
4	9	38	68	+	+
4	10	21	23	+	
4	11	13	17	+	
4	12	27	48	+	+
4	13	8	23	+	+
4	14	4	22	+	+
5	15	3	20	+	+
4	16	7	28	+	+
5	17	6	29	+	+
5	18	14	25	+	+
6	19	15	17	+	
6	20	14	21	+	
6	21	**	**	**	**
6	22	10	23	+	+
6	23	5	17	+	+
Total		265	566	21	15

*Second semester of 1985-86 and the first semester of 1986-87.
**Transferred.

Table 32

Keeseville Elementary School Second And Third

Semester Comparative Attendance Profile

for Target Students

Grade Level 1986-87	Student Number	Days of Absence 2nd Year Of Project*	1983-84	Improved Record	Decline of 40% or More
3	30	**	**	**	**
3	31	12	32	+	+
3	32	9	30	+	+
3	33	13	25	+	+
2	34	6	25	+	+
2	35	12	38	+	+
3	36	10	22	+	+
2	37	21	25	+	
3	38	23	25	+	
3	39	9	25	+	+
3	40	9	18	+	+
4	41	**	**	**	**
4	42	**	**	**	**
3	43	2	26	+	+
3	44	31	26		
4	45	27	33	+	
4	46	10	32	+	+
5	47	4	20	+	+
5	48	4	20	+	+
5	49	42	54	+	
4	50	13	37	+	+
5	51	12	19	+	
5	52	13	28	+	+
5	53	17	17		
6	54	10	30	+	+
6	55	**	**	**	**
Total		309	607	20	15

*Second semester of 1985-86 and the first semester of 1986-87.
**Transferred.

Table 33

Clintonville Junior-Senior High School Second and Third Semester Comparative Attendance Profile for 7th and 8th Grade Target Students+

Grade Level 1986-87	Student Number	Days of Absence 2nd Year of Project*	1983-84	Improved Record	Decline of 40% or More
7	24	19	20	+	
7	25	6	20	+	+
7	26	2	37	+	+
8	27	3	33	+	+
8	28	**	**	**	**
8	29	9	17	+	+
7	56	9	32	+	+
7	57	20	18		
7	58	1	24	+	+
7	59	**	**		
7	60	34	34		
8	61	**	**	**	**
8	62	15	21	+	
8	63	17	21	+	
8	64	**	**	**	**
8	65	9	21	+	+
8	66	**	**	**	**
7	67	22	18		
8	68	12	19	+	+
8	69	15	36	+	+
Total		193	371	12	9

*Second semester of 1985-86 and the first semester of 1986-87.
**Transferred.
+Elementary students in 1984-85 when the project was prepared.

The Majority Of Elementary School Students Fail To Improve Grades During The First Semester Of The Project

An anticipated program outcome was for 20 percent of the

elementary school target population to improve grades by two or more percentage points for the first semester of 1985-86 in comparison to similar information for the 1983-84 school year. Tables 34 through 36 compare the grade point averages of target students for the period of intervention with their grade point averages for the base year. The data show that 15 of the 60 students remaining in the project improved their grades during the period of intervention with 10 students or 16.7 percent of the target population improving their grades by two or more percentage points. The following paragraph discusses why the project manager believes the terminal objective was not reached as planned.

On page 15 in Chapter Two, the writer emphasized that elementary school grade point averages for basic academic subjects were higher than expected for the 1983-84 academic year. It was explained that the averages were higher primarily as a result of homogeneous grouping, with grading determined by the teacher's perception of the student's individual effort and ability. During the data collection process, a number of elementary school teachers concluded that the writer was concerned about the apparent lack of correlation between grades and results of the Metropolitan Achievement Tests. As a consequence, during the 1985-86 and 1986-87 school years, many teachers were reluctant to award the number of high grades given in preceding years.

Table 34

AuSable Forks Elementary School First Semester Comparative Grade Point Averages for Target Students

Grade Level 1985-86	Student Number	Grade Avg. First Sem. 1985-86	Grade Avg. First Sem. 1983-84	Improved Record	Improved Record 2% or More
2	1	79.30	K*		
2	2	79.30	K*		
2	3	81.50	K*		
2	4	**	**	**	**
2	5	82.30	K*		
2	6	75.30	K*		
2	7	81.70	K*		
3	8	82.10	87.25		
3	9	79.90	77.00	+	+
3	10	83.70	88.25		
3	11	78.10	77.30	+	
3	12	77.00	78.25		
3	13	80.20	85.75		
3	14	85.30	77.00	+	+
4	15	80.10	81.00		
3	16	89.80	85.00	+	+
4	17	76.80	76.00	+	
4	18	76.80	79.75		
5	19	90.30	82.60	+	+
5	20	85.10	84.90	+	
5	21	**	**	**	**
5	22	89.50	88.80	+	
5	23	92.30	86.00	+	+
6	24	80.40	79.20	+	
6	25	74.00	78.10		
6	26	83.30	83.50		
Total				10	5

*Non-graded in Kindergarten.
**Transferred.

Table 35

Keeseville Elementary School First Semester Comparative

Grade Point Averages for Target Students

Grade Level 1985-86	Student Number	Grade Avg. First Sem. 1985-86	Grade Avg. First Sem. 1983-84	Improved Record	Improved Record 2% or More
2	30	**	**	**	**
2	31	80.30	K*		
2	32	84.00	K*		
2	33	91.60	K*		
1	34	84.20	K*		
1	35	80.20	K*		
2	36	91.60	K*		
1	37	78.70	K*		
2	38	77.60	K*		
2	39	83.90	K*		
2	40	79.50	72.80	+	+
3	41	**	**	**	**
3	42	**	**	**	**
2	43	78.20	71.20	+	+
3	44	74.50	75.50		
3	45	80.40	85.00		
3	46	83.30	97.60		
4	47	93.20	96.40		
4	48	86.20	88.80		
4	49	81.00	87.10		
3	50	86.40	69.70	+	+
4	51	77.90	79.30		
4	52	73.10	77.90		
4	53	80.20	80.60		
5	54	88.10	90.70		
5	55	91.30	93.00		
6	56	70.80	72.10		
6	57	86.60	89.30		
6	58	93.40	90.40	+	+
6	59	**	**	**	**
6	60	72.70	77.70		
Total				4	4

*Non-graded in Kindergarten.
**Transferred.

Table 36

Clintonville Junior-Senior High School First Semester Comparative Grade Point Averages for Seventh Grade Target Students+

Grade Level 1985-86	Student Number	Grade Avg. First Sem. 1985-86	Grade Avg. First Sem. 1983-84	Improved Record	Improved Record 2% or More
7	27	78.50	81.50		
7	28	**	**	**	**
7	29	78.50	86.50		
7	61	**	**	**	**
7	62	85.00	87.80		
7	63	80.00	81.00		
7	64	**	**	**	**
7	65	81.50	87.00		
7	66	89.00	68.80	+	+
7	67	65.50	80.00		
7	68	67.50	87.38		
7	69	75.50	81.00		
Total				1	1

**Transferred.
+Sixth grade students in 1984-85 when the project was prepared.

The Majority Of Elementary School Students Fail To Improve Grades During The Second And Third Semesters Of The Project

A desired practicum outcome was for 40 percent of the elementary school target population to improve grades by two or more percentage points for the second semester of 1985-86 and first semester of 1986-87 in comparison to similar information for the 1983-84 school year. Tables 37 through 39 compare the grade point averages of target students for the second year of the project with their grade point averages for the base year. The data show that 21 of the 58 students remaining in the proj-

ect improved their grades during the period of intervention with 13 students or 22.4 percent of the target population improving their grades by two or more percentage points. The terminal objective was not achieved as planned for the reasons discussed on page 118.

Table 37

AuSable Forks Elementary School Second And Third Semester Comparative Grade Point Averages for Target Students

Grade Level 1986-87	Student Number	Grade Avg. 2nd Year Of Project+	Grade Avg. 1983-84	Improved Record	Improved Record 2% or More
2	1	78.40	K*		
2	2	85.50	K*		
2	3	77.30	K*		
3	4	**	**	**	**
2	5	83.40	K*		
2	6	72.90	K*		
3	7	81.20	K*		
4	8	84.30	86.50		
4	9	75.70	75.00	+	
4	10	84.30	87.50		
4	11	81.20	77.00	+	+
4	12	75.40	79.50		
4	13	86.20	86.50		
4	14	83.30	78.60	+	+
5	15	77.00	76.00	+	
4	16	87.70	85.00	+	+
5	17	79.50	77.00	+	+
5	18	80.30	78.50	+	
6	19	84.20	84.20		
6	20	87.80	85.60	+	+
6	21	**	**	**	**
6	22	89.30	88.60	+	
6	23	93.80	88.20	+	+
Total				10	6

+Second semester of 1985-86 and the first semester of 1986-87.
*Non-graded in Kindergarten. **Transferred.

Table 38

Keeseville Elementary School Second And Third Semester

Comparative Grade Point Averages for Target Students

Grade Level 1986-87	Student Number	Grade Avg. 2nd Year of Project+	Grade Avg. 1983-84	Improved Record	Improved Record 2% or More
3	30	**	**	**	**
3	31	78.50	K*		
3	32	83.60	K*		
3	33	88.30	K*		
2	34	84.80	K*		
2	35	77.30	K*		
3	36	93.50	K*		
2	37	80.10	K*		
3	38	75.40	K*		
3	39	83.30	K*		
3	40	76.10	71.80	+	+
4	41	**	**	**	**
4	42	**	**	**	**
3	43	77.20	68.25	+	+
3	44	79.10	76.80	+	+
4	45	75.80	85.00		
4	46	86.40	92.20		
5	47	94.10	97.20		
5	48	88.90	88.90		
5	49	76.60	86.80		
4	50	80.70	70.35	+	+
5	51	81.20	79.80	+	
5	52	78.00	72.80	+	+
5	53	82.70	80.90	+	
6	54	85.20	90.35		
6	55	**	**	**	**
Total				7	5

+Second semester of 1985-86 and first semester of 1986-87.
*Non-graded in Kindergarten.
**Transferred.

Table 39

Clintonville Junior-Senior High School Second and Third Semester Comparative Grade Point Averages for 7th and 8th Grade Target Students*

Grade Level 1986-87	Student Number	Grade Avg. 2nd Year of Project+	Grade Avg. 1983-84	Improved Record	Improved Record 2% or More
7	24	71.00	78.40		
7	25	71.50	78.00		
7	26	85.00	81.33	+	+
8	27	75.00	82.33		
8	28	**	**	**	**
8	29	74.00	85.00		
7	56	80.00	72.10	+	+
7	57	87.00	89.50		
7	58	92.00	91.07	+	
7	59	**	**	**	**
7	60	78.00	78.85		
8	61	**	**	**	**
8	62	78.50	86.70		
8	63	78.00	77.95	+	
8	64	**	**	**	**
8	65	79.00	85.19		
8	66	**	**	**	**
7	67	67.50	80.56		
8	68	65.50	85.06		
8	69	71.00	84.35		
Total				4	2

+Second semester of 1985-86 and the first semester of 1986-87.
*Elementary students in 1984-85 when the project was prepared.
**Transferred.

Metropolitan Achievement Test Results Improve For Many Target Students

A significant project terminal objective was for 50 percent of the students in the elementary school target population to improve their percentile rank on the Metropolitan Achievement Tests by eight points on either the reading or mathematics test. Comparison was to be for results of testing in May, 1984 and May, 1986. Tables 40 through 42 reveal that 35 students improved their percentage rank in reading and 29 students improved their percentage rank in mathematics. Twenty-five students, 37.9 percent of the 66 students remaining in the project improved their percentile rank by at least eight points on the reading test, and 26 students, 39.4 percent of the 66 students remaining in the project improved their percentile rank by eight points or more on the mathematics test.

The terminal objective was achieved because 34 students, 51.5 percent of the target students remaining in the project improved their percentile rank by at least eight points on the reading and/or mathematics test. Although the terminal objective was attained as projected, the writer was disappointed that several students scored significantly lower on the May, 1986 tests than on the May, 1984 tests.

Table 42 contains information for students in grades seven and eight who were in elementary school at the time the project was initiated.

Table 40

AuSable Forks Elementary School Comparative Metropolitan Achievement Test Results for Target Students in Grades 3 Through 6

Grade Level 1986-87	Student Number	Ach. Test % - 5/84 Rd	Ach. Test % - 5/84 Math	Ach. Test % - 5/86 Rd	Ach. Test % - 5/86 Math	Improved Record Rd	Improved Record Math	Improved Record 8% or More Rd	Improved Record 8% or More Math
2	1	10	64	18	40	+		+	
2	2	40	04	E	E				
2	3	01	43	20	30	+		+	
3	4	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**
2	5	02	05	38	44	+	+	+	+
2	6	24	20	14	23		+		
3	7	66	34	64	92		+		+
4	8	88	50	90	54	+	+		
4	9	58	52	34	18				
4	10	96	64	99	41	+			
4	11	60	50	22	22				
4	12	20	80	18	60				
4	13	82	42	60	35				
4	14	62	32	34	44		+		+
5	15	06	66	08	23	+			
4	16	08	34	34	51	+	+	+	+
5	17	E	E	E	E				
5	18	E	E	E	E				
6	19	40	78	80	64	+		+	
6	20	58	08	62	28	+	+		+
6	21	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**
6	22	58	38	80	66	+	+	+	+
6	23	78	76	98	66	+		+	
Totals						11	8	7	6

**Transferred. E - Exempt.

Table 41

Keeseville Elementary School Comparative Metropolitan Achievement Test Results for Target Students in Grades 3 Through 6

Grade Level 1986-87	Student Number	Ach. Test % - 5/84 Rd	Ach. Test % - 5/84 Math	Ach. Test % - 5/86 Rd	Ach. Test % - 5/86 Math	Improved Record Rd	Improved Record Math	Improved Record 8% or More Rd	Improved Record 8% or More Math
3	30	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**
3	31	52	44	32	22				
3	32	40	64	74	70	+	+	+	
3	33	66	26	70	76	+	+		+
2	34	20	34	75	64	+	+	+	+
2	35	01	02	32	13	+	+	+	+
3	36	08	16	96	80	+	+	+	+
2	37	02	26	50	60	+	+	+	+
3	38	24	44	72	76	+	+	+	+
3	39	72	58	74	56	+			
3	40	20	22	34	46	+	+	+	+
4	41	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**
4	42	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**
3	43	16	22	64	56	+	+	+	+
3	44	65	69	38	48				
4	45	58	76	50	68				
4	46	77	82	44	96		+		+
5	47	99	99	99	98				
5	48	66	80	76	50	+		+	
5	49	90	72	38	70				
4	50	64	40	95	59	+	+	+	+
5	51	52	54	32	86		+		+
5	52	40	23	82	56	+	+	+	+
5	53	46	58	60	34	+		+	
6	54	78	74	97	82	+	+	+	+
6	55	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**
Totals						15	14	13	13

**Transferred.

Table 42

Clintonville Junior High School Comparative Metropolitan Achievement Test Results for 7th and 8th Grade Target Students

Grade Level 1986-87	Student Number	Ach. Test % - 5/84 Rd	Ach. Test % - 5/84 Math	Ach. Test % - 5/86 Rd	Ach. Test % - 5/86 Math	Improved Record Rd	Improved Record Math	Improved Record 8% or More Rd	Improved Record 8% or More Math
7	24	36	22	36	44		+		+
7	25	19	05	34	34	+	+	+	+
7	26	54	22	50	90		+		+
8	27	30	74	28	50				
8	28	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**
8	29	34	89	40	88	+			
7	56	17	16	27	32	+	+	+	+
7	57	56	90	62	77	+			
7	58	76	75	97	97	+	+	+	+
7	59	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**
7	60	74	27	78	41	+	+		+
8	61	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**
8	62	80	70	98	84	+	+	+	+
8	63	18	14	23	14	+			
8	64	**	**	**	**	**	**	**	**
8	65	82	84	62	54				
8	66	20	02	E	E				
7	67	36	48	32	46				
8	68	24	54	34	44	+		+	
8	69	44	60	38	59				
Totals						9	7	5	7

**Transferred. E - Exempt.

District Attendance Improves In Comparison To Neighboring School Districts

A comparison of attendance percentages, Table 7 on page 15, was made with four neighboring school districts for the 1983-84 school year. Although the neighboring districts do

not have as many disadvantaged pupils as AuSable Valley, they were selected for comparison because of their geographical proximity to the district. All feed students into the same regional vocational occupational school and share certain special educational facilities which are funded by the component schools in the area. The comparison showed that AuSable Valley had the poorest attendance of the schools.

Although the district attendance for 1983-84 did not approach the high rates experienced by many urban areas, the local level of attendance, as indicated in Table 7, compared unfavorably with attendance in neighboring districts and there was a strong desire to reverse the trend. Table 43 below compares the attendance of AuSable Valley and four neighboring school districts for the 1983-84 and 1985-86 school years. The data reveal that the 1985-86 attendance ratio of 94.5 percent for AuSable Valley compared favorably to the attendance ratios for neighboring districts.

Table 43

Comparative Regional School District

Attendance for 1983-84 and 1985-86

School District	Attendance % 1983-84	1985-86	% Improvement
AuSable Valley Central	92.8	94.5	1.7
Peru Central	94.9	94.9	.0
Plattsburgh City	94.6	95.0	.4
Saranac Central	95.0	95.2	.2
Willsboro Central	93.8	94.9	1.1

A Highly Interactive Relationship Between Students And Teachers Leads To Improved District Attendance

The positive impact of the intervention strategy devised for target students also encouraged a highly interactive relationship between many non-target students and teachers at all grade levels. The result, as indicated in table 44, was a significant improvement in the attendance ratio for each of the three buildings in the school district for the 1985-86 school year in comparison to 1983-84.

Table 44

Comparative District Attendance (K-12)

for 1983-84 and 1985-86

School	1983-84	1985-86
AuSable Forks Elementary School	93.6	94.8
Keeseville Elementary School	94.8	95.7
Clintonville Junior-Senior High School	91.7	93.8
District Total	92.8	94.5

Practicum Leadership And Management

Prior to the time that the practicum was planned and implemented, the school district staff had not had sufficient vision to develop an appropriate, comprehensive program designed to reduce truancy and improve academic performance. Historical failure of the administration in improving both attendance and

student grades made it imperative that the writer be energetically involved in a visible project manager role. Thus, he assigned himself the task of coordinating the primary administrative and leadership responsibilities of the practicum. The building administration and support staff were included in the intervention process but had limited impact on the manner in which the Student Support/Home-School Liaison Committees developed a program of intervention.

The writer assumed responsibility for insuring that the professional staff was aware of the parameters and objectives of the practicum. He conducted informational meetings and solicited a commitment for general support and cooperation. A sustained effort was made to achieve a spirit of cooperation from faculty and administration to assist the committee in prescribing alternative programs and in implementing curriculum modification for target students. An ongoing effort was made to convey the message that caring, skilled professionals could make a difference in improving student attendance and academic achievement. The project manager was successful in obtaining and maintaining a spirit of cooperation from faculty and administration in assisting and supporting the committees in implementing curriculum modifications and alternative educational programs.

The practicum plan called for high involvement in the project by the members of the Student Support/Home-School Liaison Committees. Although the writer assumed responsibility for

final decision-making, care was taken not to stifle creative or innovative approaches in preparing and implementing individualized educational programs for project students.

A Positive Unexpected Feature Of The Project

An anticipated side effect of the project was that teachers would realize that many resistant learners will respond positively when shown love and geniune concern. It was also hoped that parents who felt hostile toward school officials would start to develop a fresh, sustained working relationship with the teachers of their children. However, the writer did not anticipate the degree of parent support for the project. It was gratifying to receive the high level of cooperation from most parents. They sincerely appreciated the efforts of school personnel to help their children succeed in school. Additionally, the writer did not expect the level of favorable community publicity, or that other school districts would be interested in replicating the program.

Chapter 7

MAINTAINING AND EXPANDING THE PROGRAM

An Improved System of Guidance And Pupil Personnel Support

The rationale for the practicum scheme was based upon the conviction that the most feasible way to increase attendance and improve academic performance for target students was to develop and initiate an improved system of guidance and pupil personnel support, with heavy emphasis upon personal counseling and individualized diagnostic-prescriptive plans. The overall plan of the practicum called for a number of activities centering around the goal of helping teachers develop a warm and caring relationship for the student as well as an empathy for the feelings of the student and the student's family.

Rather than attempt to enforce attendance through punitive disciplinary measures, and continue the failures of the past, heavy emphasis was placed on creating a highly interactive relationship between the student and professional, involving counseling and home visitations. The design of the project reflected the writer's confidence in the key staff participants, the members of the Student Support/Home School Liaison Committees. Committee members were assigned major responsibilities in conveying the message that caring, skilled professionals can make a significant difference in improving student attendance and academic performance.

Plans To Continue The Program

It is anticipated that the positive results of the practicum will encourage the Board of Education to maintain, expand, and integrate the intervention strategy on a continuing basis. This will require the administration to continue the program and be directly responsible for reporting results to the Board of Education. The Assistant High School Principal and the Elementary School Guidance Counselor have been trained to assume the responsibilities of project manager in the event the writer is unable to continue devoting time to the project. The combination of involvement by the Board of Education, and emergent faculty leadership, should enable the program to successfully continue with limited participation by the writer.

Rationale For Maintaining The Program

The writer is convinced that the Board of Education will maintain and integrate the intervention strategy on a continuing basis. The Board's decision to continue the project will be based on the educational and financial benefits realized during the two-year intervention period. In addition to achieving the primary objectives of increasing student attendance and improving academic performance, the district gained a significant sum of financial aid because the State aid formula is based upon average daily attendance.

The design and implementation of the practicum provided the format for a strong and viable student support program resulting

in improved attendance and academic performance for a significant number of students. An important side effect of the project was that many teachers now recognize that resistant learners often respond positively when shown love and made to feel like persons of value and importance. The writer firmly believes that as the intervention strategy is refined and improved, student attendance, academic performance, and attitude will continue to improve.

Implications For Other School Districts

The positive results of the intervention program have encouraged a number of school districts to replicate the project. Several school districts have sent representatives to visit Au-Sable Valley Central School to observe firsthand how the project works and meet with members of the Home-School Liaison Committees. A number of school districts have requested a videotape and/or printed material explaining the intervention strategy.

The writer believes that districts can successfully replicate the project if: (1) the Board of Education financially and educationally supports the project; (2) staff morale is reasonably high; (3) staff members involved in the project are dedicated, caring, concerned, and capable of developing empathy for both the student and the student's family; and (4) the administrative staff manages the project with enthusiasm and allows committee members to exercise reasonable, flexible decision-making prerogatives.

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